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To face page 268.



SLAVE MARKET AT IGBEGBE.

The slave dealer does his best to show off their good qualities.—(Page 267.)

# NIGER AND THE BENUE

*RIVERS IN CENTRAL AFRICA*

BY

ADOLPHE GUARD

MEMBER OF THE BELGIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

FROM THE FRENCH

BY

MRS GEORGE STURGE

*Englished by the Author*



LONDON

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET

*Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen*

1880

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THE WIVES AT DINNER.

The first page 185. of the first volume of the first series.—(Page 185.)

# THE NIGER AND THE BENUEH

*TRAVELS IN CENTRAL AFRICA*

BY

ADOLPHE BURDO

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*'Les fleuves sont de grands chemins qui marchent'*

PASCAL



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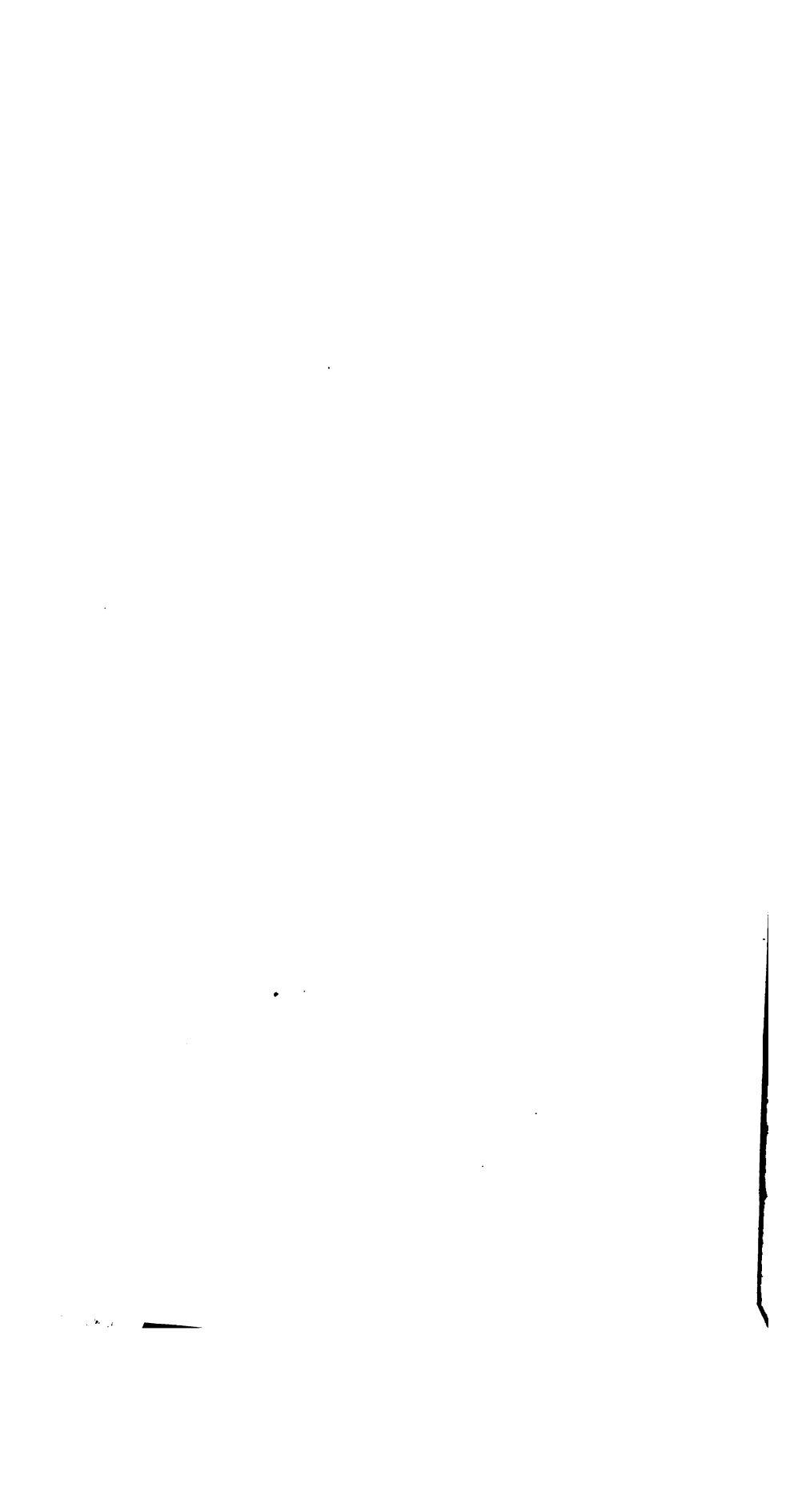
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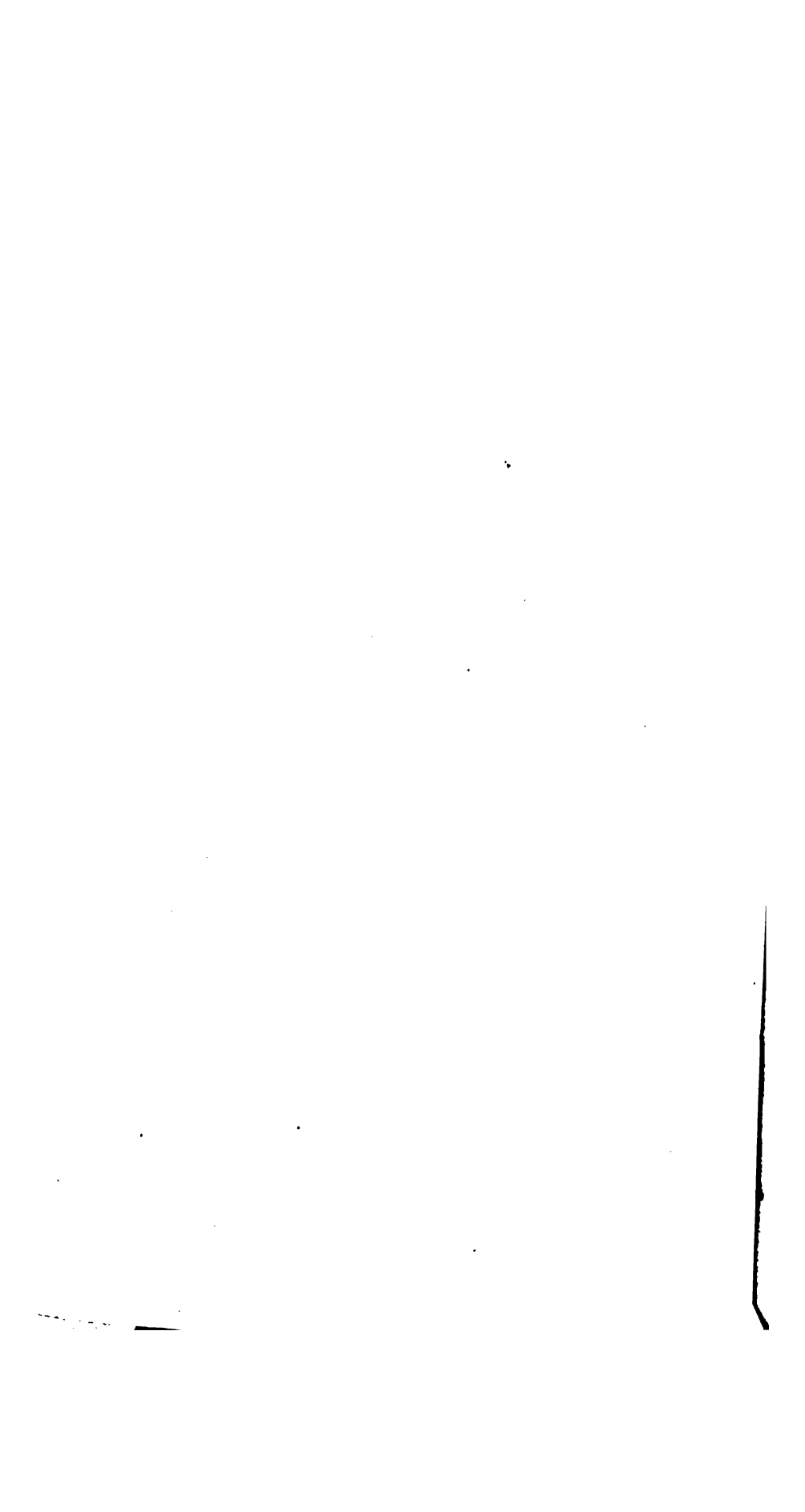
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# THE NIGER AND THE BENUEH.

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## CHAPTER I.

EMBARKATION — 'THE EQUATOR' — LISBON AND THE TAGUS — THE  
COAST OF AFRICA — AMPHIBIOUS NEGROES — THE BAY OF DAKAR —  
THE DEAD 'GRIOT' — A NOCTURNAL FÊTE — FIRST NIGHT IN AFRICA  
— NATURAL FEATURES OF DAKAR — NATIVE TRIBES — THE KING OF  
DAKAR.

ON a cold misty morning, April 5, 1878, the 'Equator,' on board of which I had embarked at Bordeaux, steamed majestically out of the Gironde. She was built for the Brazil service, and is one of the finest mail steamers of the *Compagnie Française des Messageries maritimes*. She was to land me at Dakar, a port of Senegambia, which I had fixed upon as my point of departure for an exploring expedition in Central Africa.

The captain of the 'Equator,' M. Monge, of the Royal Navy, and knight of the Legion of Honour, is not only a perfect model of a seaman, but also a gentleman and an artist. With a

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thorough knowledge of his profession he unites the frankest cordiality, and, although so much occupied, he finds time to draw and paint with skill. It is a piece of good fortune for travellers to meet with such a man, and I for one feel much indebted to him for his kindness and services.

On Sunday, April 7, we cast anchor at Corunna, in a bay surrounded with picturesque mountains. We stayed there a few hours, and by the evening of the next day we sighted Lisbon. But the sea was rough, and the entrance of the Tagus is dangerous at night, so we had to tack until daylight.

For all travellers, and particularly for one bound for the unknown regions of Africa, Lisbon is full of interest. It was there, in the humble chapel of a convent of the Hieronymites, now half in ruins, that Vasco di Gama offered his last prayer to God, before embarking for the mysterious continent. It was there also, near the same chapel, long afterwards, when Gama had taught his countrymen to double the Cape of Storms without fear, that King Emmanuel built a magnificent temple in memory of his exploits and in gratitude to God. The poor little ruined chapel and the splendid church form a curious contrast. The sight of them cannot fail to recall the strange vicissitudes, the ups and downs, of the great navigator's life. How times have changed! To-day, instead of opposition, the pioneers of civilisation find help and

encouragement on all hands. The example is a lofty one ; a king places himself generously at the head of a noble enterprise, animates his people's courage, stimulates their zeal, and finds his reward in the accomplishment of the beneficent project of opening the gates of Africa to Europe, and the treasures of Europe to Africa.

The entrance of the Tagus is very fine, flanked by Moorish towers, above which rise the light-houses, the pilot's guiding stars. Very beautiful also is the tower of Belem, that jewel of architecture, which no one can ever forget who has had the good fortune to see it, and which the artist has so often fondly reproduced.

But we are now out again on the open sea, which has hitherto not been very friendly to us, and is now roaring and heaving so that the 'Equator' is tossed like a nutshell on the waves, to the great discomfort of sensitive stomachs.

On April 12, we pass the Canary Islands, giving them a good offing, so that I can only distinguish in the distance the peak of Teneriffe with its snow-clad summit, while at its base flowers bloom and birds sing in eternal spring.

Twenty-four hours later, the climate suddenly changes. When we left Europe it was cold ; now the heat is overpowering ; we welcome a breeze and ransack our boxes for African garments and head-gear.

During the night of the 14th we stop. On the 15th, early in the morning, I try to get a glimpse of the coast of Africa, but it is obscured in a thick fog. The lighthouse erected on one of the Mamelles' mountains which command Dakar is not yet in sight, and we prudently wait until the fog has cleared off, for there may be reefs near.

At length, towards nine o'clock, it begins to disperse; it condenses, collects at the base of the mountains and on the shores, and through the breaks in it I can see with my field-glass trees with leaves as big as the sails of a windmill, masses of verdure, and strong trunks with tufted crowns like gigantic candelabra. This is Africa indeed, with cocoa-nut-trees and proud palms looking like sentinels. We are all standing on the bridge silent and composed, and I said to myself, 'Welcome, land of perils! What fate hast thou in store for me? Saturnine country! Having devoured so many others, wilt thou deign to be propitious to me? God grant that it may be so.'

The 'Equator' meanwhile is slowly proceeding, and after doubling the point of Almadies and Cape Bernard, and coasting the island of Goree, she enters the Bay of Dakar.

She has hardly cast anchor when canoes come up to her from all sides and form a circle round her. The natives, standing in them with their paddles in the air, utter unintelligible cries. The

strange sight reminds one of the third act of the 'Africaine.' But in this case they are not meditating a fight, but only trying to do a little business, the secret of which the natives of these latitudes have discovered, and whose origin may be told in a few words. They are not allowed to board vessels in the roads, but are permitted to paddle round these floating cities in canoes. One day some of the passengers amused themselves by throwing pieces of money to them, one of which accidentally fell into the sea. The negro who was watching for it at once dived and brought it up between his teeth. Ever since, passengers have amused themselves by throwing money into the water, and the natives take good care not to leave it there, for out of this diversion they make, it appears, a pretty fat living. These Africans are, in fact, almost amphibious, and in aquatic sports might compete with porpoises. I should add, that the numerous sharks which infest the coast disdain their flesh. Is the odour, *sui generis*, which is exhaled from their bodies, repugnant to them? I cannot say, but the fact is certain. At Dakar, a French soldier, fishing one day with a line, had his foot carried off by a shark, that was on the look-out for prey, and died from the effects. The negroes, more fortunate than he, can dive with impunity.

From the bridge of the steamer we can discern

the houses of the Europeans at Dakar, all built close to the bay. Great embankments have made the shore accessible all the year round, and protect it against the inroads of the sea, which in winter are very dangerous. A French cutter, the 'Verdeuil,' is at anchor. Visits are exchanged; the authorities of the port board our vessel, and we exchange news of Europe and the Colonies. I consult them about getting my luggage ashore, and at length, about five o'clock, I leave the 'Equator,' after saying good-bye to the officers and passengers, with whom I have been on very friendly terms, and I do not leave them without regret. They press my hand without many words, but their long and affectionate looks sufficiently express their fears for me.

One of the first things which catches the eye on landing at Dakar is a gigantic baobab-tree with its bare and wide-spreading branches. In the summer season the baobab loses its leaves, but they come again with the fertilising rains of winter. It then bears an enormous fruit, called monkey-bread, because the simian race is very fond of it.

Tradition says that when Vasco di Gama landed on the African shore he knelt down and prayed under the shade of this tree, and for this reason it was long held in veneration; now it is used for mooring boats.

The harbour-master had undertaken to deposit

my luggage in the general depôt, so having no anxiety on this score I had no sooner landed than I began to explore Dakar. Leaving the European dwellings behind me, I ventured into the negro village. It was a mass of huts, most of them very much like hay-cocks. A fence shuts it off from the whites, and protects it from the wild beasts which prowl at night round the poultry-yards.

It was on April 15, and the moon was full. In the shadow I suddenly saw some bipeds glide by and vanish noiselessly into the darkness. Some were naked, others wore loose garments of white or dark blue, out of which emerged a black head at the top and two feet of the same colour at the bottom. They might have been taken for spectres wandering in the darkness.

All at once my attention was arrested by the singing and cries of women proceeding from the open door of a hut. I went nearer, and by the light of wicks burning in palm oil I saw the dead body of a negro frightfully emaciated, round which a dozen young negresses were gesticulating with deafening yells. The dead man was a *Griot*, and they were celebrating his funeral rites. It is the custom on the death of a *Griot* for young girls to dispute with the evil spirit for his soul, and try to drive him away with their singing and cries.

Weary of the noise, I followed a troop of negroes, negresses, and children, who seemed to be flocking



to some nocturnal ceremony, and was thus led to the sea-shore, where a considerable crowd had already collected round a band of at least forty musicians arranged in a semicircle. With his face turned towards the moon, the leader of the orchestra was conducting a strange concert. The choice and variety of the instruments left much to be desired ; they consisted of tam-tams and tambourines, cut out of the trunk of a tree, and covered with asses' skin, and fifes made in the most primitive fashion from stems of bamboo. Nevertheless, there was something grand about this orchestra. Mozart and Beethoven may be heard anywhere in Europe, but Africa is the last refuge of barbarous music. Without suspecting it, I had been present at a religious fête which the Joloffs celebrate at every full moon.

I listened for a good while to this rude, strange harmony—sometimes the clamorous fife set up a diabolical solo, or the tam-tams took up the cadence, or the tambourine broke wildly in—now and then a voice was blended with these fantastic performances and a monotonous chant was introduced. Then men, women, children, and musicians altogether made the air resound with their howls. And the crowd seemed like a whirlwind, for the negroes never conduct a sacred ceremony without dancing, and what weird, infernal dancing it was ! It was delirium, madness, wizard orgies, with Beelzebub leading the round.

Nevertheless, although you may be in Africa attending a negro concert, an empty stomach has no ears. Where could I dine? Captain D'Aubigny, on board the 'Equator,' who was on his way back to St. Louis, had given me this advice: 'At Dakar, if you are hungry, thirsty, or sleepy, go to Madame Ginoyer's; you will find there a good table and good lodging.' Nothing could be better; but in the middle of the night how was I to find this blessed place? I spoke to the first negro I met in French, but had scarcely opened my mouth when he was off. A second, to whom I repeated my question, also ran away without answering me. I then remembered having seen the European habitations on the shore, and taking my bearings, before long, reached the *Hôtel de France et des Messageries*, kept by the lady in question.

There I partook of a dinner which, though not sumptuous, seasoned as it was by hunger, seemed to me delicious. After the roast I thought I would ask the little negress who was waiting on me for some bread, reflecting, however, that she would be sure not to understand me.

'Tout de suite, monsieur,' she replied. O 'local colouring'! My negress could speak French! Her name was Catherine, and I was being waited upon by a poor girl, who, except her colour, was very much like her companions in Europe.

It was now time to think about a lodging, and

I innocently hoped to find one in Madame Ginoyer's hotel. Great was my disappointment on being told that all her beds were engaged! What was I to do? In spite of the lateness of the hour I had to turn out again, accompanied this time by Catherine, who was instructed by her mistress to show me the way to Zimmer's.

Zimmer is a good-natured fellow, from Alsace, who has never refused to do a service for anybody, nor missed the opportunity of turning a penny. I had no sooner explained to him the object of my visit, than he took down a key, which was hanging on the wall, and turning towards the door invited me to follow.

'Ah!' said I, 'are you not going to give me a bed here?'

'No, I have only one room here, and that is let to M. Bouchet, a sepoy lieutenant; but I will take you to my other house.'

Good heavens! then I had to turn out again.

On the threshold Zimmer stopped. 'O,' he said, 'I forgot, I must take some gauze, and a hammer and tacks, to put up a mosquito-curtain to your bed.'

Dismayed at this fresh delay, I said, 'No, no, never mind about that.' 'As you please,' was the reply.

Had I been able to see his face at that moment I should certainly have seen a smile, with a little

pity and a good deal of mischief in it. We set out, and at length reached the place.

I was very tired, and wished for nothing so much as to get to sleep. However, I could not refrain from first making a tour of inspection round my room. No wardrobe, no window, but four doors, two of which were glazed, and opened on to a gallery which ran at the back and front of the house; most of the houses in Senegambia are like this, and have no second storey. In the middle of the room were a table and three chairs, a bed in one corner, and in another a little board set up on four legs, with a jug and basin on it—but no water. Water is very scarce at Dakar, and is only supplied by the authorities to the officers and soldiers; the inhabitants have to get it by digging wells, every day, on the downs.

Having finished my inventory, I blew out the candle. But what is this buzzing sound? Alas! mosquitoes. Without the least consideration for my fatigue they attack my unfortunate person. I fight them as furiously as they assault me. I slay them by dozens, but all in vain. They come and go, they buzz, they get enraged, they are implacable. At day-break I get up in despair, without ever having closed my eyes. What an experience for my first night in Africa!

The next morning I went out early, for in Senegambia one must beware of the sun. By eight



o'clock it is very hot ; by eleven it is scorching ; later on, it is baking, roasting, and woe to the man who encounters its fiery rays bare-headed.

Dakar is the principal point of the peninsula of Cape Verde ; although the Island of Goree, close by, may have more trade, it is an important centre from the numerous works which the French have executed there, and there is room for it to extend itself, while Goree is limited to its rock. The establishment of the ocean mails, the port, the general dépôt, the post and telegraph office, which are to be in an excellent position, the arsenal, where there are well-furnished workshops, the trade fostered by steamers running four times a month between Bordeaux and Brazil—all this insures unrivalled supremacy to Dakar. At the same time the merchants might increase its prosperity, by following up the traffic with the interior, for it appears that but little effort is made to attract the native caravans, which, by degrees, leave off coming.

In this respect Goree and Rufisque display greater activity, and it is one cause of their prosperity.

The population of the peninsula consists of Joloff Mussulmans, who form, by far, the largest part ; Serrawollies, who are still heathens, and worship two gods, namely, *Takar*, the great judge, and *Tiorak*, the good god ; and *Nones*, a variety of the Serrawollies, from whom they differ in some of their customs, among others, the laws of inheritance.

Among both these tribes, the priests have barbarous beliefs and practices, which are gradually disappearing with the advance of Islamism. For instance, when they want to convict a thief or a sorcerer, they have recourse to ordeal by fire or poisoned water.

Lastly, there are in the peninsula, as at many other places, *Griots*, who follow a nomad life, are much given to drunkenness, have no defined worship, and wander from village to village, playing the tambourine.

Having become, after death, the prey of the evil spirit, instead of being buried their remains are placed in the hollow trunks of trees. Their comrades try to rescue their souls, and I have described how the young *Griot* girls set about tearing them from the claws of Satan.

The Joloffs recognise marriage, but they think polygamy honourable, and are permitted to have four legitimate wives. Although abolished by French law, slavery still exists among the natives, but the slaves are, in reality, only servants, and are rarely ill-treated. The Joloffs have, besides, customs which are quite patriarchal, as for instance the division of lands for cultivation, which takes place every year. Their king, the *Bourba*, as he is called, distributes them according to the number of women and children in a family, and he always scrupulously respects the rights of the proprietors

who cultivate their lot well. The supreme power is hereditary, through the female line. When a royal line becomes extinct, the nation elects a new chief, and chooses him from one of the families who are privileged to provide the country with masters.

The king of Dakar, although considered by Europeans to be only a petty king, of no importance, is absolute monarch of his people. I did not fail to pay him a visit, and am glad I did so, for he is a most original specimen of a sovereign.

Whether it is his broad flat nose, or his twinkling eyes, or his high cheek-bones, or his thick lips displaying two rows of white teeth, something or other gives his face a perpetual grin. Perhaps it is all these put together, or the absence of care, and the peace of a good conscience. However that may be, it is a fact that the king of Dakar is always grinning.

He lives in a hut, or rather several huts, like those of his subjects, but the dwellings of his wives are round. The hut into which I was taken was rather large ; at least, there was room to sit down in it, which was not the case in those of all the native chiefs whom I visited. As far as one can judge of age from a black face, the king of Dakar may be about five-and-forty. Besides his long *bou-bou*, he had thrown over his shoulders a large cloak, without seam, an old European garment which had evidently experienced more than one

vicissitude before it reached his august shoulders. His headdress was a cap or hood, fitting closely to his temples, surmounted by a very broad-brimmed straw hat; he was covered with charms and amulets of all sorts and sizes. Several negroes, his ministers and courtiers, I presume, were standing near him, anxiously awaiting my arrival, or rather the customary presents from a stranger.

Having taken my seat, I told the black monarch about my departure from Europe, described the wonders of my country, and informed him of my design of exploring the interior of Africa. Did he comprehend the gist of my harangue? I would not undertake to say so, for I must own that to my confusion, or rather perhaps to his own, he made no reply. But when he saw me put my hand in my pocket, his face, by nature radiant with smiles, assumed such a look of complete satisfaction that I laughed too, which, however, did not offend him in the least, but only increased his good humour. Alas! if the gods depart, so does the majesty of African kings; this poor mortal was looking out for the tribute or charity which travellers always offer him, and which generally means a forty-sou piece—sometimes even less, for silver coin is current in Dakar. It is said that he makes a pretty good income out of it, for a good many steamers put into port, always having a number of passengers on board either going to or returning



from Brazil. Without being lavish I was rather more generous, and after giving him some money I offered him four bead necklaces and some coarse calico for his wives, at which he was greatly delighted. My readers would never guess what he gave me in return. Neither palm wine, nor a charm, nor an amulet, but his portrait, taken by a real photographer, M. Bonnevide, who lived for some time in Senegambia. Dakar is decidedly too civilised, and I took my leave of it as soon as possible, to go in quest of more genuine savages.

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THE KING OF DAKAR.—(Page 14.)

THE COUSCOUS POUNDER.—(Page 87.)



## CHAPTER II.

RUFISQUE—ITS TRADE—CHOICE OF A GUIDE—THE FAITHLESS CAMEL-  
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M'BIDJEM—ENCAMPMENT AT N'DEN—MOORISH CARAVAN—WE LOSE  
OUR WAY.

My preparations were quickly made ; my luggage was to remain at the dépôt until I had decided what route to take for the Niger. I did not know whether I should go by the west coast, by the Gulf of Guinea, or by Fouta-Jallon and Bakhoy. It would depend on the Colonial government, and I therefore resolved to go first to St. Louis, taking the inland route, that I might visit the provinces of Baol, Kayor, and Oualo.

I bought a horse for myself and hired a mule to carry my provisions and tent as far as Rufisque, where I was told that I should easily meet with a camel, which would be of much more use to me than a mule. Zimmer undertook to procure saddles, and Madame Ginoyer, with whom I had continued to board, furnished me with provisions. Thus provided, I left Dakar on April 20, accompanied by the good sepoy lieutenant, who went with me on horseback as far as Tiarroye.

The road from Dakar to Rufisque lies almost all the way along the shore, which is very fatiguing for the horses, and rather monotonous for travellers. I passed successively Tiarroye, M'Baw, and several small negro villages dotted along the shore, the inhabitants of which live by fishing. Young and old were dabbling in the water as if it were their native element. They fraternally share the produce of the day between them, and even the children play their little part in it.

Rufisque is built close to the sea, and is one of the most important centres of European commerce in Senegambia. The site on which it is built was noticed in 1364, by some sailors from Dieppe who were on their way to Sierra Leone. It is in the province of Baol, and, like Dakar, its population is composed of Joloffs and Serrawollies. The continual coming and going of caravans from the interior give it an air of great animation; they consist of long lines of mules, camels, and oxen, bearing bags of arachis or of gum, driven by pensive-looking Moors, silent and proud in their wretched rags. The native products are exchanged there, with a vast deal of chaffering, for cotton goods, fire-arms, powder, and beads, for which the blacks find a great sale in distant parts of the country. The stuff most in request is a coarse blue cotton, called *guinée*, of which the natives make their long gowns, *boubous*, or *koussabs*. In

spite of the duties imposed by the colony for the benefit of similar goods from Pondicherry, they give a great preference to the Flanders *guinées*, and particularly those made by the firms of Hoorerman-Cambier and Parmentier van Hoegarden, of Ghent. Those of MM. Parmentier are most of all in request because of their trade-mark—a star in a triangle with a crescent over it; in the natives' estimation this Mohammedan symbol adds to their value. Moreover, they appreciate its excellent quality, for it is a mistake to suppose that the negroes are incapable of discerning the quality of stuffs. On the contrary, they always distinguish a durable material from one which looks the same, but is less substantial. Before making up their minds they consult together, examine the *guinées* offered them, feel their weight and turn them about. It has therefore become the custom to supply them with a good quality. Sometimes, however, they are just like children, and nothing is easier than to sell them rubbish, glass, steel, or copper ornaments for example, provided they produce a good effect. But these articles form only a secondary branch of European traffic, which consists chiefly of stuffs, fire-arms, and powder.

The firm of Maurel and Prom of Bordeaux has an important branch at Rufisque, and I received a most cordial welcome from their agents there, which decided me to accept their hospitality for a few

hours, until I had found a guide and a camel, for I had just sent back the mule I had hired to Dakar.

As soon as it was known in Rufisque that a stranger was inquiring for a guide and a camel, a crowd of natives of all ages came to offer their services, from a little fellow of ten years old to a venerable-looking patriarch. They were of various types as well as ages, some Mussulmans, others heathen Serrawollies, and all of them, young and old, professed to know every turn of the way, the easiest and most picturesque routes, the names of all the villages, all the springs of water, and I know not what besides ; in short, they were as good as Joanne's guide-books. I had intended engaging a guide only as far as M'Bidjem, to change again at Diam Balo or Bètète, and so on as far as St. Louis. But I was advised against this plan ; it was pointed out that I should run the risk of being left alone at any moment, or of being at the mercy of a man with whom I had made only a temporary engagement. As this appeared to me to be good advice, I agreed with the negro whom I selected to take me to St. Louis by stages to be afterwards decided on. I promised to find him in food during the journey, and to give him fifty francs on reaching our destination. He was still young, tall, and active, with bright piercing eyes, and a frank expression of countenance ; he wore scarcely any clothes, but was covered with charms



of all sorts. His name was Biram, and he assured me that he loved white men, delighted in traveling, and could speak French. I soon found, however, that his vocabulary was confined to a few words which he had picked up in the streets of Rufisque. But I was not dismayed by this, for I always managed to transact my business with the natives, thanks to General Faidherbe's French-Joloff dictionary, which I had made my *vademecum*.

I had far more trouble in getting a camel than a guide, for these animals are almost entirely taken up by the caravans. Their owners are mostly old Mussulmans, avaricious and timorous, who try to take advantage of their customers, and appear to have a vivid apprehension of the dangers to which a journey to the interior with a white man might expose them and their beast. Towards evening, however, I succeeded in coming to terms with a camel-driver, who consented for fifty francs and his food to take my baggage on his camel, but only as far as M'Bidjem. This arrangement did not suit me very well, but for want of a better I agreed to it, enjoining upon him to be in the yard of M. Maurel's factory at half-past five next morning.

I was up at five and my horse saddled. Biram strutted at my side, proud to carry my rifle, and I longed for the arrival of the camel-driver. Half-past five, six, half-past six, and neither camel nor



camel-driver appeared. At last, getting more and more uneasy, I sent Biram to find out the cause of the delay. He returned, having found nobody in—the man, he said, had gone off that morning. This was all the more disappointing because the sun was getting high, and the hours of the day propitious for the start were fast slipping away.

I have since proved, in several cases, that breaking their word is one of the characteristics of the Moors, and have acted accordingly. These good people do not know how to say no. Whether you ask them to do an easy or a difficult thing, they always answer by stooping down, groaning, and making two or three salaams ; then, with their eyes fixed on vacancy, they pretend to be reflecting maturely, even about the merest trifle. Sometimes they mutter a few unintelligible words to themselves, which, of course, makes you impatient ; if you press them, they are put out ; you urge them to come to a decision ; they venture a yes, at all hazards ; you are content and reckon on their fulfilling their promise. But more often than not, you never see them again, and if you happen to meet them and reproach them with their faithlessness, they feign surprise, do not even excuse themselves, and behave as if they had never promised anything at all. Great patience and diplomacy are required with guides and porters, the plagues of all exploring expeditions in Africa.

I should probably have lost the whole day in looking for a beast of burden, if it had not been for M. Laud, a very obliging man, whose acquaintance I had made that morning. M. Laud is a Frenchman ; he was a naval officer, and left the service to devote himself to agriculture in Senegambia. He has become an African planter, and his plantation is not far from Rufisque, and about two miles from Kounoun. He noticed my annoyance and said, ' Sir, I know Rufisque well, for I often come here on business ; if you like, I will go and look for a camel for you.'

I thanked him warmly, and at last, about eight o'clock, a camel-driver appeared with his beast. Negotiations were at once entered into ; he first wanted to see what he had to carry ; I showed him my two canteens, my tent and stakes ; then the price had to be agreed upon. The more impatient I became, the more time he lost in hesitation ; pretending to agree, then half drawing back, with indescribable nods and gesticulations.

' Come, we must make an end of this,' I exclaimed at last ; ' sixty francs to go to St. Louis, by whatever route I choose, besides food. Do you agree ?'

He went off mumbling his acceptance of the offer and began to load, but in a few minutes he appeared again. ' What's the matter now ?' I asked. ' The guide wants to make me take a

package which you did not mention.' It was a little case containing some bottles of wine. I was on the point of really getting angry ; the camel-driver saw it, and in spite of his cringing look I saw that he was beginning to unload his beast. Finding that he meant to put my good manners to the test, I sent Biram to find out how much more he wanted. 'Ten francs,' he said, on his return.

'Tell him he shall have them, but he must load immediately.'

He did so at last, but it was nearly nine o'clock when we left Rufisque. I was on horseback, Biram on foot, and the camel-driver was leading his beast ; but before starting, the old Moor, raising his eyes to heaven, prayed to Allah and his prophet to watch over him, his camel, its load, and myself. Thanks, pious Mussulman.

Just as we were starting, M. Laud came up on horseback. 'I am going with you,' said he. 'I am returning to Kounoun, which is in your way, and it will give me great pleasure if you will spend a few hours at my plantation.'

I was the more ready to do so as I wanted to see for myself the results of the agricultural experiments of which he had told me, and what the soil of this beautiful country will produce under active and intelligent cultivation.

If we had not had so many delays in starting, nothing would have been wanting to complete the

charm of this stage of our journey. What a contrast to my expedition of the day before, when my eyes were dazzled by the reflection of the sun on the sand of the sea-shore, with nothing to be seen but a boundless horizon, not even a blade of grass, and no shade to be had. To-day the scene was quite different; we passed through fertile plains and groves of palm-trees; vegetation was everywhere abundant; here and there rather parched; but nature is a good mother, and repairs in the night the mischief she has done in the day; and besides, this splendid flora will revive at the return of the winter season, which will be here in two months, with its beneficent rains.

I rode on, enjoying the air, absorbed by the charms of this land, which was, for the first time, revealing its treasures to me, and in my admiration I forgot the sun. This was wrong, for its effect is fatal, and you may pass gently from vertigo to sun-stroke and from sun-stroke to death. By M. Laud's advice, therefore, we quickened our pace, leaving our baggage in Biram's charge.

Before reaching Kounoun, I noticed with surprise a gigantic tree, whose foliage afforded so much shade that we were sheltered for a few moments as we rode under it. It was an india-rubber tree. The village of Kounoun is close by, and having left it behind us we reached M. Laud's estate, which we were to inspect in the evening,

for the heat had become so great that we had to gallop on to the rustic habitation on the right, on slightly rising ground. Our horses were unsaddled and tied to a large forest tree, in the middle of a field, where they were almost hidden in the long grass, and when they had had a little rest the negro would take them to water at a neighbouring spring.

M. Laud's house faces the most cultivated part of his plantation, with a north aspect. It is built of overlapping planks of woods, and the roof, made of shingle, is supported by the trunks of young palm-trees. A verandah runs along the front; the partitions which divide it from the house, and the rooms from each other, are only made of double matting, thus allowing the air to circulate freely.

Being much in need of refreshment, we took a glass of palm-wine, which I had not tasted before. It seemed to me sour, and, what was worse, there were flies, grubs, and all sorts of insects floating in it, which one cannot help swallowing. But I must have patience; I shall get used to it, and the day was not far off when this beverage seemed like nectar to me.

In the meantime the baggage arrived. The old Moor makes a sign to his camel, and gives him a little tap on the knees. The animal immediately bends his haunches forward and kneels down, bending his hind legs under him. When you see



him in this attitude, with his long slender neck and his stupid head raised towards heaven, you might fancy he was praying. While he is being unloaded, he bellows in the most deafening manner, and the echoes around, disturbed by the wild music, reverberate his yells. The Moors call the camel *gueulem* (the bawler); to a French ear the name sounds appropriate, and sometimes when I hear him making these noises I feel inclined to call him worse names still. However, he is a good and courageous beast, bears great fatigue, eats little, endures thirst better than any other animal, and, in short, is a pattern of resignation.

M. Henri Duveyrier,<sup>1</sup> the learned and intrepid traveller to whom we are indebted for many valuable researches among the most hostile and barbarous tribes of the Sahara, the *Touaregs* among others, is of opinion that at the time of the Punic wars the principal means of locomotion and transport were oxen, both as beasts of burden and for drawing chariots; but that after that period the Arabs endeavoured to acclimatise in Africa the camels that followed their armies. They succeeded, and from that time they have been the most useful servants of man, in these torrid regions where water is often so scarce. While my camel, having been fed and watered, was reposing on his knees with his eyes wide open, motionless

<sup>1</sup> Now Vice-President of the *Société de Géographie de Paris*.

as a sphinx, I prepared to make the tour of M. Laud's plantation. It was now four o'clock, and the sun was not so powerful ; nevertheless I sheltered myself under my large Indian hat with a double shade for the eyes, and a puggerie falling over the neck, and with my gun on my shoulder set out accompanied by my host.

In front of the house is an English garden, where attempts have been made at the cultivation of European plants. There are beds of sesame, lemon- and orange-trees, cinnamons, vines, raspberries, and the avocado pear ; all these look very promising, but they require constant attention and frequent watering, as well as great care to protect the young shoots from the teeth of deer and monkeys, who are very fond of them. The watering, however, is not difficult, as a stream runs through the property, the ground is sloping, and the necessary implements are not wanting.

Further on there were long beds planted with *Urtica utilis* ; attempts have lately been made to use its fibres in manufactures, but unfortunately the deer are too fond of them, and the number of half-eaten buds scattered on the ground extorted an impatient exclamation at the expense of these impudent visitors from my host. On all sides a species of acacia grows, from which a fine oil is obtained very suitable for clock-work. We passed by clumps of palm-trees, cocoa-nut-trees, and date palms, succeeded by baobabs, pepper-trees, citrons,

and climbing india-rubber plants, very productive, all well pruned and tended. Sometimes the foliage met and interlaced, forming arched avenues, so that delicious shade and coolness are to be had at any hour of the day.

Game abounds here, and I was delighted to accept M. Laud's proposal to try a shot. The moment was propitious; there was at least an hour before nightfall, and although we had no dogs, a dozen little negroes, led by Biram, beat the bushes and raised the startled game.

The timid guinea fowl soon reach the deepest recesses of the wood; the deer bound in the high grass; pheasants escape from the thickets, but we cannot possibly approach them. A covey of red partridges rises and we knock down a few. Clouds of Barbary pigeons fly startled over our heads. I hear the cry of a large bird which I had before taken for a pheasant, and shoot it. It is a calao. The natives call it *dobiné*; it is as large as a cock, and its double beak accounts for its strange cry. We did not fire at the green parrots, the red and grey paroquets, nor the humming birds with their glittering plumage; they are the ornaments of this plantation of seventy-two acres, and if, like the birds in Europe, they are pilferers, they do as much good as harm, by destroying innumerable insects. There is also a little brown bird spotted with white, which catches worms and insects, and flies only



about three feet from the ground, as if tied to it by a thread. We left him alone too, as he is very useful to the planter.

But it is getting late ; the sun disappears below the horizon without any warning, and it is time to return to the house. Biram has taken charge of our spoils, consisting of five red partridges and eight Barbary pigeons. We shall have quite a feast this evening.

There are four little huts round M. Laud's house for his labourers, and one is used as a kitchen. I took out of my stores a packet of *nutritine*, of which an excellent soup was made, and we ate our game with great relish, washing it down with wine from the case before mentioned. We drank to our distant countries, our families and friends, and the fulfilment of our hopes ; the repast ended with pleasant memories and cheerful prospects.

I had enjoined on Biram to see that the camel was loaded before dawn, my horse saddled, and every one ready for the start. This time I was punctually obeyed, and the day had scarcely dawned when we were on our way to M'Bidjem. I had bought a mule of M. Laud, which Biram mounted bare-backed with the air of a matador. It was a sight worth seeing when I urged on my horse, and Biram's mule, following his example, galloped hard after me. He clung on with heels and hands,

uttered cries of despair, and, entirely forgetting his dignity, thought of nothing but maintaining his equilibrium, in which he did not always succeed. A true Sancho Panza, he was courageous in face of real danger, but took fright at trifles, was both indefatigable and lazy, as negroes generally are, talked incessantly, gesticulated a great deal, and was always grinning.

My host had insisted on accompanying me to the next village, as he wanted to show me a river which runs near his plantation, the bearings of which have never yet been taken. We reached it after going nearly two miles to the east. In some places it is six or eight yards broad and more than two deep. It appeared to be full of fish. I was surprised at the swiftness of the current in the middle of the dry season, and at its high banks. At a little distance from where we were it divides and flows round an island covered with baobabs, then it flows under palm-trees in a north-easterly direction. I presume that it takes its rise from the undulations of the Diander, and falls, in all probability, into a lake situated north-north-east, which I am told communicates with the sea.

This excursion had taken us a little out of our way, and we had to retrace our steps as far as the village of Betiot, where, having cordially thanked my host, I started for M'Bidjem and he returned to his Eden.

The road we took to M'Bidjem is very pleasant; the country is fertile and the views extensive. On the right and left there are thickets of palms and cocoa-nut-trees, and charming and picturesque vistas open between their branches ; little streams of water wind about among the verdure, and birds with varied plumage perform their morning toilet ; parrots and paroquets fly overhead uttering shrill cries, and white grebes gambol in the swampy hollows. Small villages are dotted along the road, where black babies, quite naked, were playing at the doors ; they ran away like so many frightened sparrows at our approach, and after we had passed followed us with timid glances.

At M'Bidjem, which we reached at about four o'clock, there is a French station, guarded by a few marines. It is situated on the top of a little hill, which commands the dried-up bed of the river Tamna ; a fosse has been dug in front of it and a drawbridge thrown over, to keep up connection with the outside world.

The village of M'Bidjem appeared to have a considerable population ; the chief, to whom I paid a visit, is a young man, tall and dignified. He received me cordially, talked about Kayor, where I was going, and of the dangers I should encounter there, which, however, he exaggerated, telling me of the exactions made by the *tiédos*. He took me to see his two horses, handsome little animals, with

bright eyes, supple bodies, and sinewy legs. On our way back he pointed out, at some distance, the huts of his wives, without, however, inviting me to visit them. Altogether, I thought he had benefited by intercourse with white men, and he seemed to be a sensible man.

There were outside the village some *gourbis*, intended for the use of officers passing this way, or camping out. They were kindly placed at my disposal by the chief officer of the station, which saved me the trouble of pitching my tent, and I passed a pretty good night, in spite of the inevitable mosquitoes. I defended myself from them as well as I could, with the help of a mosquito curtain, with which I had provided myself at Dakar, but it was already full of holes, allowing the ravenous creatures to feast at the expense of my face and hands.

As usual, I gave the signal for an early start, and the sun had not risen when we crossed the river Tamna, or rather, that part of its bed which it has abandoned, to be engulfed and to take a subterranean course and flow into the sea about two miles from M' Bidjem. I had only been able to obtain very imperfect information about the route to Bétète, through the interior, and Biram, who had assured me that he knew the country well, was quite ignorant, as I found out only too soon, of the roads of Kayor. All that I had been able to learn at M' Bidjem was that at twenty-two miles north-

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north-east I should come to the village of M'Den, which was correct.

The journey to M'Den was without incident, across a fertile country, at least as beautiful as that which I had left behind, perhaps richer, but certainly not so healthy, for during the rainy season these verdant plains, whose luxuriant vegetation I so much admired, are turned into swamps, which, at the return of the dry season, exhale fatal miasmas.

On my arrival at M'Den, I pitched my tent near an immense baobab-tree, the indispensable ornament of every Senegambian village. The natives had probably rarely had a visit from a European, and I found myself an object of profound curiosity, but there was nothing hostile in their attitude. Some of them, squatting on the ground, watched all our movements attentively; others were gesticulating, and evidently making comments on our culinary apparatus.

I sent for the *Bourba*, and after offering him a little *guinée* I asked him to send me some water, eggs, milk, and fowls. He did so without making any objection, and, thanks to him, we made a substantial meal, to which I added a haunch of venison from a deer I shot the day before at M'Bidjem; I had given the other three quarters to the soldiers at the station.

I passed a wretched night; devoured by insects, disturbed by the shouts and singing of the natives,

who were carousing round my tent, and kept continually on the *qui-vive*. I did not close my eyes, and we were off at a very early hour in the morning.

On leaving M'Den we were joined by a caravan of three Moors, with two camels, and one of them offered to show me a way to Kayor which, as he said, led by rich oases, of which I had heard and very much wished to see. We went on together until ten o'clock, when I made a halt, while my companions took an easterly direction, having pointed out a way to me, which they said would lead direct to Bétète. Whether they deceived me or whether I lost my way I cannot say, but certain it is that we wandered about the whole day in that part of Kayor, not knowing where we were or what place we should get to.



## CHAPTER III.

KAYOR—OASIS OF TOTALL—GREY MONKEYS—LOST IN THE FOREST—  
 NOCTURNAL CONCERT—SWAMPS—BIRAM'S HISTORY—THE TELE-  
 GRAPH—BÉTÈTE—ENCAMPMENT AMONG THE SANDHILLS—CRABS—  
 A HYÆNA—MOUIT—ST. LOUIS—SENEGAMBIAN TRIBES—A EURO-  
 PEAN HOUSE OF BUSINESS—POLITICS—GENERAL FAIDHERBE—THE  
 ISLAND OF GORKE.

THE inhabitants of Kayor belong to a race of the Joloffs, but they are more vigorous and better made than those of St. Louis and the shores of the river. Kayor is governed directly by the Colonial administration, which has established a station at M'Gniguis, the former capital of the province. A powerful party, however, refuses to acknowledge French authority, and rebels when it imagines it possible to resist it. The chief's name is Latdior; he is a brave and intelligent young man, son of the *linguaire*, that is, the eldest sister of the old *Damel* or king, this being the order of succession to power in Kayor. The nobles or *tiédos*, as they are called, a pugnacious and drunken set, are at once warm partisans of Latdior and scourges of their own country, which they ravage and pillage without mercy. They are not Mohammedans, but venerate

an invisible God whose representative they worship under the form of an earthen vessel, the *canary* or *bouy*, that is, 'The unknown.'

Towards five o'clock we reached a vast oasis, which I afterwards learnt was the oasis of Tottall, where I enjoyed an enchanting and wonderful sight—wide plains covered with thick grass, of such a beautiful green that it looked like a velvet carpet; palm forests, intersected by ravines; everywhere curious underwood and dwarf date palms, and here and there capricious streams of water trickle through the grass or tumble over the wooded edges of a precipice and are lost sight of. No sign of a road, nothing but narrow paths made by wild animals or negro hunters, which cross and recross each other, double back, and generally end in little thickets. There was no doubt about it, we had lost our way. As we had very few provisions left and night was approaching, I availed myself of the last gleams of light to obtain a fresh supply, after having shown Biram and the camel-driver the best place for our encampment, and leaving them to chop some wood and find water.

The oasis of Tottall abounds in game, and I soon shot two partridges and three Barbary pigeons. Without thinking of it I had gone some distance, and night overtook me in the midst of a thicket, where the silence was only broken by the cries of the guinea fowls and partridges coming home to roost,

and the pleasant song of the humming-birds warbling their good night to the setting sun. Suddenly I emerged on a clearing, which seemed to have been made in the underwood, inclosed by enormous baobab-trees and large citrons, whose branches formed trapeziums, parallel bars, swings—quite a gymnasium. Just then, shrill cries, like rude and grating laughter, made me raise my eyes, and I saw a multitude of monkeys indulging in the wildest gambols, chasing each other, stopping short suddenly, darting into the air, hanging by their tails, balancing themselves for a moment, darting up again with greater agility than ever, and making, all the time, grimaces and contortions, and assuming attitudes and expressions, meditative, tragic, or ludicrous.

The monkeys who afforded me this curious spectacle had grey skins, with white in front, black faces and long and beautiful tails. Their skins are much prized in Europe, where, particularly of late years, they form an important article of commerce.

It was by this time quite dark, and I began to despair of ever finding my way out of the inextricable jungle into which I had imprudently ventured. My situation was getting serious, and became still more so when the profound silence which had reigned was broken by growls and the hoarse cries of hyænas and jackals emerging from their lairs, and I had nothing to defend myself

with but a gun loaded with small shot. I went on at all hazards, finding my way as best I could, and making the air resound with whistling, to attract, if possible, Biram's attention ; but there was no response, except the cries of wild beasts in search of prey.

Of course I was aware that such incidents are inevitable in travelling in an unexplored country, but I was new to it, and, fond as I am of forest solitudes, it is not exactly to my taste to be in them in the dark, and face to face with wild beasts turning night into day. I was preparing to resign myself to my fate when I heard the report of a gun, then a second and a third. Without thinking, and at the risk of falling into the hands of a party of *tiédos*, I walked on in the direction of the sound, for the shooting continued with mathematical regularity. After half an hour's walking I reached the edge of the forest, where I caught sight of a fire, a tent, and Biram shooting into the air with my Remington gun. The poor fellow ran to me in great delight, and begged pardon for using my gun, but he was afraid I had lost my way and was frightened at the cries of the wild beasts. He was trembling, I could see, in every limb, but perhaps it was less on my account than his own. At any rate he felt safer, he said, when the white man was there.

As soon as I reached my tent I had five large

fires lighted to keep off the wild beasts, to whose presence the trembling of my horse bore witness, to say nothing of their cries ; he could not be pacified till he was brought close to us and picketed near the tent with the camel and mule.

This done I gave strict orders to Biram and the camel driver to keep up the fires all night, intending to keep watch myself also, for besides the wild beasts we had to fear bands of *tiédos*, whose attention might have been attracted by the shooting.

Having satisfied myself that my ammunition was in good condition, I listened to the strange concert going on around me. It was a solemn and terrible orchestra. The forest, so silent during the day, was no sooner covered with the veil of darkness than it resounded with a thousand discordant sounds ; no longer the cry of the guinea fowls, the cooing of doves or the warbling of little birds with gay plumage ; they were asleep high up in the trees, or timidly sheltered in the thickest underwood. It was a lugubrious though majestic din. The barking of the jackal was answered by the laughing of the hyæna as if he were delighted that the former was in search of prey, and was congratulating himself beforehand on the feast he would be sure to share. Strange freak of nature ! the hyæna, destitute of scent, is incapable of providing for himself, but by instinct follows the jackal, who



is an excellent hunter, and has similar tastes, and when, having found his prey, he barks triumphantly, the hyæna rushes up and ravenously helps him to tear it up. Then the king of the forest roars, either to call his mate, or in search of prey ; at the sound of his voice the denizens of the forest tremble ; the birds congregate amongst the foliage, the monkeys steal away to the tops of the trees, and the guinea fowl timidly takes refuge under the bushes ; but in vain ! Before she has even heard the enemy's approach a huge paw has pitilessly clutched her. Night too, is the time for the leopards, the panthers, and tiger-cats. What sport, what feasting, goes on !

Shaking off the lethargy which had fallen upon me as I listened for more than an hour to this savage harmony which completely absorbed me, I got up and went towards the forest armed with my gun, intending to kill one of the wild beasts I had just heard so near. But I could not get near enough to any one of them, and my shots took no effect. I got but little rest that night, but I did not regret it ; I had been present at a scene so imposing, nature had offered me so grand an entertainment, that I shall not soon forget it.

At break of day the smouldering remains of the fires were lying round the camp, the camel was asleep with one eye open, his driver and Biram snoring with clenched fists ; the forest gradually emerged from the darkness, and forgetting the

The road we took to M'Bidjem is very pleasant; the country is fertile and the views extensive. On the right and left there are thickets of palms and cocoa-nut-trees, and charming and picturesque vistas open between their branches ; little streams of water wind about among the verdure, and birds with varied plumage perform their morning toilet ; parrots and paroquets fly overhead uttering shrill cries, and white grebes gambol in the swampy hollows. Small villages are dotted along the road, where black babies, quite naked, were playing at the doors ; they ran away like so many frightened sparrows at our approach, and after we had passed followed us with timid glances.

At M'Bidjem, which we reached at about four o'clock, there is a French station, guarded by a few marines. It is situated on the top of a little hill, which commands the dried-up bed of the river Tamna ; a fosse has been dug in front of it and a drawbridge thrown over, to keep up connection with the outside world.

The village of M'Bidjem appeared to have a considerable population ; the chief, to whom I paid a visit, is a young man, tall and dignified. He received me cordially, talked about Kayor, where I was going, and of the dangers I should encounter there, which, however, he exaggerated, telling me of the exactions made by the *tiédos*. He took me to see his two horses, handsome little animals, with

bright eyes, supple bodies, and sinewy legs. On our way back he pointed out, at some distance, the huts of his wives, without, however, inviting me to visit them. Altogether, I thought he had benefited by intercourse with white men, and he seemed to be a sensible man.

There were outside the village some *gourbis*, intended for the use of officers passing this way, or camping out. They were kindly placed at my disposal by the chief officer of the station, which saved me the trouble of pitching my tent, and I passed a pretty good night, in spite of the inevitable mosquitoes. I defended myself from them as well as I could, with the help of a mosquito curtain, with which I had provided myself at Dakar, but it was already full of holes, allowing the ravenous creatures to feast at the expense of my face and hands.

As usual, I gave the signal for an early start, and the sun had not risen when we crossed the river Tamna, or rather, that part of its bed which it has abandoned, to be engulfed and to take a subterranean course and flow into the sea about two miles from M' Bidjem. I had only been able to obtain very imperfect information about the route to Bétète, through the interior, and Biram, who had assured me that he knew the country well, was quite ignorant, as I found out only too soon, of the roads of Kayor. All that I had been able to learn at M' Bidjem was that at twenty-two miles north-



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stone house, at the turn of a valley, with the French flag floating over it ; it was the station at Bétète.

Whatever may be his nationality, the European traveller may always reckon on a kind and cordial reception, and, in case of need, substantial help, at the French stations dotted about in the various provinces of Senegambia, as I have myself several times proved, and I here wish to express my lively sense of gratitude.

At Bétète I laid in some provisions, and the next day, leaving it behind, we took the direction towards the coast. Having crossed wide undulating plains we reached the sandhills, which in this region form fantastic defiles, carpeted with parched vegetation. The view on reaching the sea is like that between Dakar and Rufisque ; the shore is pretty, with fine sands, which at low tide are covered with seaweeds, shells, and innumerable yellow crabs. What an ugly creature the crab is ! Perched up on its claws, it seems to be a shapeless mass, and its eyes, one must suppose, move incessantly in their orbits, for it can see right, left, before, and behind all at once, and walk in any direction without turning round. There were thousands of them, and every time a wave broke upon the shore they all ran to snap up the insects and decayed matter it left behind, and escaped as quickly as possible from the succeeding one.

By the time night closed in we had passed the huts of Yor and had reached Cape Carwoor, where we encamped on the sandhills. Attracted by the light of our fires the natives collected in crowds, but they were quite friendly, and I bought fish, wood, and a fowl from them, which they readily exchanged for blue cotton.

I was very tired and lost no time in retiring to my tent, where I lay down on the mattress I had brought from Dakar, which was all the bedding I had. It was simply a mattress case ripped in the middle, so that it could be filled with dry grass every night, which was thrown away in the morning ; the cover was then folded up, so that, in case of need, all my bedding would go into my pocket. I hoped to sleep like a top that night ; my eyes were soon closed, and I had fallen into a deep slumber, when I was awakened by a strange tickling on my face and hands, while I heard a crackling noise all round me like the sound of the breaking of dry twigs. Still half asleep, I slowly raised my hand to my forehead, where something slimy was crawling. Never shall I forget my sensations when I found a large crab struggling in my hand, and that my tent was paved with these crustaceæ. I got up, and at every step they crunched under my feet. I shuddered with disgust, and shaking myself went down to the sea-shore. It was all in vain, the horrible sensation followed me everywhere—every-



where I saw crabs, and any more sleep was out of the question.

In order to change the current of my thoughts I began to traverse the sandhills with my gun, hoping to shoot one of the jackals or hyænas whose hoarse cries led me in the direction of a thicket. Before long, thanks to a clear night, and African nights generally are clear, I saw a large animal picking the skeleton of a camel or an ass. I fired, the creature prepared to spring at me, but at the second shot he rolled into a ditch with a stifled howl and I went up to him. It was a hyæna, and he lay there in the last agonies of death. It completed the ghastly impressions of the night, and I quickly decamped from the scene of my adventure.

At last the stars began to pale, and the first rays of dawn were gilding the horizon when I returned to my encampment. There I saw the camel-driver, now prostrate in the sand, now standing upright, turned towards the east, and scattering handfuls of sand around him, as he performed his salaam ; he was saying his morning prayer, like a faithful follower of the prophet. As for Biram, I had to shake him to rouse him from his heavy slumbers.

From the information received from the chief of a neighbouring village, I left off following the sea coast, because at this point a tongue of land forms a peninsula extending for several leagues, so that

had I followed it I should only have had to retrace my steps. By eleven o'clock we reached the French station of Mouit, about fourteen miles from St. Louis. Its aspect is most picturesque; abrupt hills alternate with little plains, as far as the eye can reach, and the whole is covered with scanty herbage and rare marsh plants.

The route which I took next day, and which leads direct to St. Louis, has the same characteristics. Vegetation is scanty, and in several places the soil looks like lava. I passed several villages, and the animation which I observed in them showed that we were near a great centre. There were caravans carrying gums and arachis, and Moorish encampments, where kneeling camels were contentedly ruminating; their drivers squatting near them clothed in *Koussabs* of white or blue cotton, with bare heads and a dreamy and gloomy aspect. I noticed the contrast between some beautiful Moorish women, with finely cut features, long hair, and clear complexions, and the ugly negresses, with their flat noses, thick lips, and short frizzled hair.

At last we saw the bridge of Faidherbe, and soon a welcome sight presented itself—the European buildings of St. Louis.

St. Louis forms an island, of which the centre is a port of that name, which, if I mistake not, dates from the year 1637, when the French occupied Senegambia; it is now used as a barrack and

magazine. Two large bridges connect it with the main land, the bridge of Sohr and Guet N'Dar.

The river Senegal flows into the sea at the place called Barbary Point. The bar is always dangerous; it changes with the bore wave, rendering constant observation necessary, and official signals indicate the state of it day by day.

The traveller, coming from the rich but almost savage regions of Kayor, where there is but little commerce, is astonished at the activity which prevails at St. Louis; numerous caravans meet there from all parts, but chiefly from the upper part of the river, consisting almost exclusively of Moors, with traditional camels; at Guet N'Dar, the stir and bustle is still greater, owing to the large market held there. This quarter is chiefly inhabited by fishermen. They live by fishing, and carry on their trade with great spirit. It is curious to see them launch their canoes, armed at either end with an iron hook. While the boats dance on the surf, they stand with incredible fearlessness and give them a measured motion, so that they always present the prow to the wave. One is struck with the dexterity with which they pass the most dangerous places and with the accuracy of their manœuvres. They are also of great service to the colony; armed with boat hooks and commanded by a pilot, who is a true Jack Tar himself, they take the soundings every day at the bar. The ves-

sels which navigate the river must not draw more than thirteen feet of water.

The governor of Senegambia, Colonel Brière de l'Isle, received me with great kindness. He informed me that about a fortnight before another French traveller had arrived, M. Soleillet, whose object was to discover how the colony could be united to Algeria, and who for this purpose had started for the upper river; he also told me that he had charged him with missions to several of the native chiefs, who, without being hostile to France, are not fond of frequent visits from Europeans. He therefore advised me not to go to the Niger by the same route. It was not without great regret that I acceded to this. I had maturely reflected on certain opinions of Governor Faidherbe, corroborated by M. Mage, and in my opinion, taking into account the observations which have been made on the nature and different levels of the ground at Ségo, on the force of the currents of the Joliba, and the contraction of the river Bakhoy, it would be possible to take advantage of these circumstances to bring the river Senegal to the same level as the Niger. I admit that such an enterprise would be beset with difficulties, but is it not practicable? If so, it ought to be attempted, for the results would be grand. To unite the Senegal with the Niger would be to solve one of the great African problems; the way would be opened to the very heart of the



country and to Timbuctoo, that legendary city, the last mysterious refuge of native hostility, fostered by Mussulman cupidity. Once this veil torn away, the death-blow would be given to the curse of slavery in Western Africa ; it would be the diffusion of light in these barbarous countries ; it would open the way for European commerce, so long at the mercy of the Moorish traders ; in short, it would be a magnificent undertaking, to which I should esteem myself happy to have contributed in ever so small a degree.

In the meantime, as my chief object was to visit the native population on the shores of the Niger and the Benueh, and as my project of going by way of the Senegal was frustrated by circumstances beyond my control, I determined to return to Dakar by sea, and to embark for the Gulf of Guinea at Goree. The steamer, however, which runs twice a month between Dakar and St. Louis, was not ready to start, so I took advantage of the time to observe more closely some of the African tribes which give the capital of the French colony the aspect of a huge caravanserai.

The population of St. Louis is chiefly composed of Joloffs and Foulahs. The Joloffs at first sight appear handsome, but on further examination their heads are too small, their legs too thin, and their feet have no instep. Their skin is of the purest black, and polished like ebony, which is an indica-

tion of its fineness. They are descended from the Ethiopians, and now occupy the whole of the left bank of the river Senegal. Most of them profess Islamism. Their chiefs have the title of *Bour* or *Bourba*, except at Kayor, where they are called *Damels*.

The Joloffs are divided into four castes : the *mouls*, or fishermen (this is the lowest class) ; the *oudai*, or tanners ; the *tugs*, or blacksmiths ; and the *tiédos*, or nobles.

The Foulahs, although they inhabit the same region as the Joloffs, are of an entirely different type. They are of Abyssinian origin, and are bronze rather than black ; indeed, they call themselves a white race. They are not so tall as the Joloffs, but are well made ; they have large mouths, aquiline noses, and high foreheads.

Senegambia swarms with Moors ; they settle temporarily near European centres, where they dispose of the products they bring from the interior. They are essentially distinct from the negroes, whom they despise and have always tried to oppress. They have not thick lips, nor flat noses, nor curly hair ; their mouths, it is true, are too large, but as a compensation their lips are thin ; their heads are covered with an abundance of wavy hair ; their foreheads are prominent, their noses aquiline, the chin well formed, and the eyes are level with the face. Their necks are well set, their

attitude proud, thoughtful, and stately. They generally have well-grown beards, and always go bareheaded. They never wash either themselves or their clothes, which causes the most disgusting effluvia from their persons. Their clothing consists of a long gown or *koussab* down to the feet, concealing very ample trousers which do not come below the knee.

The Moorish women would be pleasing to the eye if it were not for their extreme embonpoint, which, as is well known, is considered a beauty among the Orientals, and their want of cleanliness. They have well-proportioned heads, long eyelashes, their eyes are iridescent and languid, they have full busts, and their figures are delicately and correctly modelled.

There is at St. Louis, and even at Dakar and Goree, a class of women whose unusual appearance is a surprise to the traveller ; they are the *signardes* or *signares*, the result of the union of negresses, whose massive forms they inherit, with Europeans, to whom they owe their clear skins and, relatively, well-formed heads. The name, derived from the Portuguese, signifies lady or mistress, and they have had their good times, now, alas ! gone for ever. Before the abolition of the slave trade the Signardes commanded a nation of slaves and labourers. The Portuguese, from whom they are mostly descended, lived very little on shore ; being

slave traders, they were almost constantly at sea, and had at Dakar, Goree, and St. Louis *seribas*<sup>1</sup> managed by negresses, who levied a heavy tax on their profits. Hence the insolent luxury and ephemeral splendour of those prosperous days ; but since the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of the slaves the source of their fortune is dried up, and, left to themselves, many of them have taken to the trade of the courtesan, and with indolent steps drag about in the streets of St. Louis the last remnants of their former splendour. They are often given to drunkenness, and have an overweening passion for jewels, with which they sometimes cover themselves to such an extent as to excite universal ridicule.

The Signarde is a comical object, with her full figure squeezed into a corset too small for her, muffled up in petticoats, panniers, and trains, her recalcitrant feet forced into boots with high heels of the Louis XV. fashion, and a hat of the Watteau, Rubens, or Niniche style jauntily set on her frizzly wig. When one sees her walking about in this guise it is difficult to keep one's countenance, for she is evidently a martyr to her boots, her stays half suffocate her, and she is embarrassed with her train, which she vainly tries to hold up with grace. Nevertheless, ridiculous as she often is, the eye of

<sup>1</sup> The name by which the negroes call the stations of the merchants.—TR.

the European, tired of the repulsive nudity of the negro, rests with some relief on this yellow belle.

Among the public buildings at St. Louis may be mentioned the governor's palace, whose principal façade looks into a garden surrounded by iron railings, the bridge of Guet N'Dar, and vast structures which serve for schools or barracks, and complete the quadrangle of the square. Not far from the palace is a modest little church, and just opposite, at the corner of the next street, the Treasury, a shabby little house not much in keeping with its name ; farther on are the quarters of the Artillery, with their fine workshops having access to the river. Returning along the quay you pass the offices and warehouses of the great European commercial firms who have established themselves there, for the convenience of loading and unloading their vessels. Economy of labour is a matter of serious consideration at St. Louis. Since the abolition of slavery, the blacks, poor miserable creatures as they are, and naturally lazy, live in idleness, and content themselves with watching the laborious European with curiosity, saying to themselves *in petto*, like the lazzaroni at Naples, that it is folly to work so hard for a living. The fact is that the generous hospitality which is one of the traditions of the Joloff country helps greatly to encourage their idleness ; any one when he goes anywhere is at liberty to walk into any house he pleases, to estab-



lish himself at table, and take his fill of *couscous*, and no one ever thinks of asking whence he comes or whither he is going.

Abominable *couscous* ! How many times have I been awakened before it was day by the noise of the pestle with which it was being pounded ! I was lodged in a house the ground floor of which was occupied by three or four Joloff families, and every morning, or rather every night, for they were at work by four o'clock, I was aroused from my slumbers by the grating monotonous noise of the pestle. One day I could stand it no longer, and went down to ask what it was, and it was thus that I learnt how the national dish is prepared. A mortar scooped out of a hollow tree, and nearly three feet high, contains the millet or maize to be ground ; the negress, who is standing, holds with both hands a heavy wooden pestle, which she raises and lets fall with the regularity of clockwork. In order to keep her infant quiet, she often has it tied to her back with a cloth. Not very hard to please, the poor child makes a pillow of his mother's back and finishes his sleep in this uncomfortable position, which, however, seems to suit him well enough. Ophthalmia is very common among the natives, and I am inclined to think that this strange way of carrying their children is one of the original causes of the disease. Kept in this position for hours at a time, the baby's face lies on its mother's

naked back, who perspires profusely with her hard work, and its eyes are thus continually bathed in fetid perspiration. Less than this would be enough to generate ophthalmia.

Before leaving St. Louis I wished to visit some of the great French warehouses, which I could easily do, thanks to some letters of introduction from Bordeaux with which I had been furnished. The warehouses abound in blue *guinées*, printed cottons, glass beads, household utensils, and earthenware, all things which the natives covet, and which they exchange for arachis, of which an oil is made, and gums which issue from the trunks of acacia-trees, some white, produced by the *verreck*, other sorts red, extracted from the *nébouéd*.

The Moors are very shrewd at making bargains, and the European who transacts business with them, of whatever kind, had need have some skill, and even diplomacy.

A piece of *guinée* is the standard of the value of products ; they also, however, use cowries as money, which are found at Mozambique, where they are not current.

The European traders extend Scotch, or rather French, hospitality to strangers, as I know from experience. The *salle-à-manger* is generally spacious ; over the table is suspended a sort of punkah, which serves as a fan, and a young negro, placed behind the guests, moves it by means of a cord.

It serves also as a fly-catcher and ventilator. Those who are subject to sea-sickness had better beware of it, for the perpetual swing of this sort of pendulum sometimes occasions qualms fatal to the appetite. This, however, was not the case with us ; my hosts were accustomed to it, and I am proof against sea-sickness, so that I was able to do justice to the poultry, the vegetables, and sweets which were handed round, accompanied by generous wines, which essentially tended to enliven the entertainment.

It is scarcely necessary to say that my position as a stranger unfortunately led my host to talk to me about the state of the colony, and in spite of my efforts to turn the conversation he was so much engrossed with the subject that he constantly recurred to it. He complained, not without bitterness and an air of absolute conviction, of the despotic rule of the military authorities, and said that they interfered in all matters, even in those in which they are evidently incompetent to form an opinion—in purely commercial matters, among others, make regulations, issue decrees, impose restrictions, or decide questions, all without consulting the merchants, who ought to be the best judges of their own interests, and should have a voice in them, since their fortunes are entirely bound up with those of Senegambia. He warmly gave it as his opinion that if France were wise she



would make a fundamental change in the government of her colonies, for what is true of Senegambia is equally true of Algeria ; she ought not to allow the military authorities the monopoly of power which they assume on the pretext that they alone can control the natives. Let the army in future continue to play the part of protector in which it has so nobly acquitted itself hitherto, but in such matters as are not within its sphere let it yield the palm to the civil power, so that some day the merchants may become masters of their own destinies.

As I listened to him, I said to myself that his criticisms on the interference of the military authorities in the civil affairs of the colony caused him unwittingly to do injustice to a man whose merits I was sure he would be ready to acknowledge, Colonel Faidherbe.<sup>1</sup>

Senegambia has passed through strange changes since it was discovered by Lancerotte in 1447. The Portuguese, French, and English came there by turns without being able to hold their ground, and scarcely to establish themselves there at all. In 1817 it was restored to France ; the officers commissioned to take possession of it set out on board the 'Medusa,' which made a terrible shipwreck on the fatal sandbank of Arguin. Fifteen governors have since ruled in succession, but it is vain to look for any traces of works executed by

<sup>1</sup> Formerly Governor of Senegambia, now General.

them. Whether their good intentions were frustrated by the hostility of the natives, or whether they were unequal to their task, certain it is that Senegambia owes scarcely anything to them. At last Faidherbe came, and from the day when the government fell into the hands of this brave soldier and brilliant administrator the colony seemed to cast off its swaddling clothes. In a few years he accomplished more than his fifteen predecessors had done in half a century. He saved it from the destruction and ruin which the hordes of El Hadji bring in their train.<sup>1</sup> He consolidated what he was fortunate enough to save ; he established schools to which he invited the native chiefs to send their sons, and thus inaugurated a future of peace and prosperity ; he opened to commerce the ports of Fouta-tero, Kasson, and Bambouk, which had previously been profoundly hostile to the whites. It is to him that we are indebted for the annexation of the provinces of Dinar and Oualo ; he insured to the traffic of the upper river a security which it had never known before ; he abolished customs, the vexatious and exorbitant duties which the native chiefs arbitrarily levied on the merchandise and transactions of the French merchants ; in short, from one end of Senegambia to the other, all those who are able to appreciate him and his

<sup>1</sup> Witness, for instance, the heroic resistance of Paul Holl at the Fort of Medina, and his deliverance by Governor Faidherbe.

labours, whether Europeans or natives, speak of him with gratitude and pride.

There are many things left to be described. Richard Toll's country house, a charming spot, a little way out of St. Louis ; the attempts at the cultivation of cotton and indigo which have been made everywhere ; the poetic Senegambian legends, particularly the marvellous exploits of Samba, which are sung by the *griots* in the evening in the negro huts, accompanied by tambourines and much gesticulation. Then there are some curious tribes, the Sarrakolies and the Kassonkajs, the Peuhls, who are shepherds, the Toucouleurs, Mohammedan fanatics, the Bracknas, the Douaïchs, the Trarzas, who live in the plains of Aftouth, on the borders of the Sahara, and who have for a long time devastated the left bank of the Senegal, the stations and forts established with a view to protect at once European commerce and the subject tribes ; those of Mérinaghen and Dagana, which command respectively the lake of Guier and the province of Oualo ; those of Podor and Saldé, established one at the eastern, the other at the western extremity of the island of Morfil, the centre of the Foulah populations ; the station of Matam, commanding the Damga, that at Bakel, Senoudebou, Aérè, and especially the fort at Medina, which Governor Faidherbe relieved in 1857, when its heroic defender, Paul Holl, held it for three months with a

handful of brave men against the hordes of El Hadji. But time presses, and I am in haste to get to Goree, where I am to embark for the Gulf of Guinea.

At Goree, while waiting for the English steamer which was to take me to the delta of the Niger, I was the guest of M. Guiraud, manager of and partner in the house of Maurel and Prom, of Bordeaux ; besides being an excellent administrator and man of business, he has the charm of a man of the world.

The town of Goree is boldly perched on a solitary rock, which rises out of the sea at a very short distance from the shore ; it is wealthy, and carries on a brisk trade ; there are handsome warehouses and a European population, who courageously brave the chances of the climate, which too often prove disastrous to them. When I was there all seemed happy and prosperous, but, alas ! a few months later, after my return to Europe, I heard that yellow fever had attacked it, and that this terrible scourge had carried off one after another of the white residents, and, as it was expressed in a letter from Dakar, had never ceased its ravages until there was nothing left to prey upon. Of the friends with whom on June 7, 1878, I had shaken hands, when I embarked on board the ' *Corisco* ' for the Gulf of Guinea, one only was left : M. Guiraud had survived the plague, but he only owed his safety to a voyage to France at the time of this frightful epidemic.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE 'CORISCO'—THE GAMBIA—ST. MARIE DE BATHURST—CASSAMANZA, RIO-PONGO, AND MELLIKURI — AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE — VISIT TO FREE TOWN—THE COAST OF KROO—MY TWELVE KROOMEN—THE IVORY COAST—THE GOLD COAST—DELTA OF THE NIGER—I LEAVE THE 'CORISCO.'

THE 'Corisco' is a charming little steamer, very smart, nearly new and well arranged; she is said to be one of the best boats on the line between Liverpool and Fernando-Po. She was not, however, specially adapted for passengers, being intended, almost exclusively, for trading to the coast of Africa. The same comforts are not to be found on board her as in the French boats of the *Messageries Maritimes*. They take a considerable number of passengers as far as Madeira, and even some who are going to rusticate in the Canary Isles. Further than that it is rare to have any passengers; and if there should happen to be a European lady on board, it is an event long talked of on the coast. I was not so fortunate as to meet with any, and it was at Goree that I saw the last feminine white faces. It was there also that I heard French spoken for the last time. After that it was all English, both on board and on shore, and it is absolutely

necessary to be well acquainted with it to make your way.

The captain of the steamer was a good specimen of a thorough-bred English sailor, big, burly, and square built, and an excellent fellow at heart. He was a trader as well as an old seaman, and was above all things matter of fact and practical. Like others of his class, he receives a percentage on the cargo and the business done by his ship ; he measures a man's importance by his business transactions on the coast, so a humble passenger, and especially a traveller with his modest baggage, is of very little consequence in his eyes. When he has not a good cargo he is dejected, taciturn, and irascible ; but when there are plenty of casks of palm oil, dye-woods, and tusks of ivory on board, his broad face grows calm again, and he may even be seen to smile. There is no need to go down into the hold, nor to examine the scale of the water line, to discover the state of the cargo ; the captain's face will enlighten you on the subject—his good humour is in direct proportion to the amount of his consignments.

If you are possessed with a mania for conversation there is no one to exercise it upon but the doctor ; he has not yet had time to become so absorbed in practical affairs as to have no ideas beyond. He is generally a young man who has just finished his studies and makes a voyage to

improve himself. He still retains a few illusions, a little romance, and has some solid acquirements. Many a time have I broken a lance with him as we sat on the bridge, with our feet on the netting on a level with our eyes, and we had interminable controversies *de omni re scibili*. And if at such times the stout captain happened to pass by, he would stop, listen a moment, shrug his shoulders, and disappear with a look of commiseration.

Meanwhile the 'Corisco,' like a good screw steamer, was rapidly making way. We passed along the coast, Sin and Saloum, a fine fertile province, the country of the Serrawollies, which produces dye-woods, wax, honey, and goats, and the soil of which, well cultivated, would be splendid, if the vast swamp of Fellani did not render it insalubrious. Lastly we reached the province of Niom and the beautiful river Gambia, which we enter in order to stop at St. Marie-de-Bathurst, our first stage.

The Gambia belongs to the English. Formerly the French had a station at Albreda, and the numerous offices they have at St. Marie made them wish to possess the place; but as England demanded the cession of Gabon in exchange, the negotiations came to nothing. At least, this is what I was told on my passage to St. Marie-de-Bathurst.

The population of this town is the most motley



that I have ever met with on the western coast of Africa ; there are Serrawollies, Jolloffs, Mandingoes, Feloups, Balantes from Cassamanza, Kroomen, Sarrakolies, Kassonkets, Laptos from Goree, and Signardes.

Although the colony is English, the French commercial houses appeared to me to be the largest and most important. There are also Portuguese, Italians, Dutch, and Germans, and as all these nationalities, both European and native, retain their own manners and customs, it forms a most curious medley.

At Bathurst the negresses undergo very hard labour ; they load and unload the vessels as they come alongside the warehouses. It is pitiable to see them, worn out with fatigue, bending under heavy burdens, with nothing feminine left about them ; neither grace nor modesty, scarcely even the form of woman. And when evening comes, instead of going to rest, they get drunk with gin and spend the night in yelling and dancing, till they sink with exhaustion and bestial intoxication.

The land on the left bank of the Gambia, where St. Marie was built in 1815, is very marshy, and therefore very unhealthy. The houses are built along the river, separated from it by a road planted with trees, which form a shady avenue. A brisk trade is carried on there, and caravans come from all parts, especially from Fatteconda. You can

scarcely venture farther than 140 miles up the river, as far as the Macarthy Islands, even in a vessel not drawing much water ; canoes are the only means of going further, and in these the traders reach as far as Yanimaroo. There is a very strong bore at Barraconda.

On the right bank of the river is a tongue of land a mile wide, inclosed by two creeks, named respectively Boonyado and Swara-Cunda, which serve for trading with the interior.

The little piece of land surrounded by water on which St. Marie is built communicates by a narrow channel, called the Oyster Creek, with the English island of Combo, which includes the territory of Sabbajee, and several towns inhabited chiefly by old people, for the young ones leave them to go and work in the European factories at Bathurst. These territories on the left bank of the Gambia have been conquered by the Mohammedans of Goonjour, a vindictive and effeminate race, who still number over one hundred thousand. The colony has other hostile neighbours, among them the Kings of Combo and Barra, who sometimes try to waylay the trading caravans with a view of re-establishing the imposts they used to levy under the name of customs, and which were fatal to European traffic. There is now, however, a sufficient military force at St. Marie to withstand these attempts, and to protect the interests of the whites.

During the evening that I spent at Bathurst I heard a *Griot* singing a curious legend to the accompaniment of his tambourine; he recounted in a plaintive chant the history of a ghost which haunted the European station at Macarthy. 'A long time ago,' he sang, 'a sergeant of the pale-faced race killed himself there in the hot stage of a fever. . . . Ever since his shade has wandered in the neighbourhood. . . . At night he haunts the station as if he whom he represents still bore sway there, and terror reigns around, and the little negroes do not venture there in the evening . . . and the Moslem priests distribute charms upon charms to avert the terrible and ill-starred influence exercised by the wandering spirit over the fields and huts of the land. . . .'

Early next morning we weighed anchor, and proceeded in the direction of Sierra Leone. We left behind us the river Cassamanza, at the mouth of which is the island of Caraban, where the first European establishment was founded in 1830. Since 1860 the river has belonged to the French, and on the right bank, at a distance of thirty leagues from the sea, they have built the fort of Sedhiou as a protection for their settlements.

Then come the rivers Cacheo, Jeba, and Rio-Grande, which are all tributaries of the Portugal, which flows through Fouta-Jallon, where it divides

and gives rise to the Coomba and the Tomine, whose sources are in the Kong Mountains.

At the mouth of the river Jeba is the archipelago of Bissagos; all this district is very rich and fertile, especially Cassamanza, which produces fine timber. It is peopled by the Feloups, Balantes, Papels, and Biafras, who are all heathen, and worship, under all sorts of forms, an unknown god whom they call *Emit*; there are also the Mandingoes, veritable athletes, restless and warlike. They are fanatic Mussulmans, and never touch a drop of fermented liquor.

Further on we pass the Rio-Nunez or Siquilenta, flowing from the Fouta-Jallon, where attempts have been successfully made to cultivate coffee. The natives of this district, the Landoomas, are idolaters, and slavery flourishes among them. The Nalous, who have embraced Moslemism, inhabit the district near the coast. The French have built a fort at Kakandy on the left bank of the Rio-Nunez.

The Rio-Pongo, which comes next, belongs to the French; it has five or six mouths, the chief of which are called the Sand Bar and the Mud Bar. The country watered by it was formerly one of the chief centres of the slave trade. It is peopled for the most part by idolatrous Sousous, who recognise a god called *Sinto*, personified by the large trees of their forests.

One of the most important rivers of this district is the Mellikuri, formed by the junction of the Sangarka, the Fouricaria, and the Mourbea, all flowing from the eastern slopes of the Fouta-Jallon. The numerous French vessels which go there bring large quantities of arachis and gum. The country watered by this river is occupied by Sousous and Bajas, while in the interior there are Bouves, who resemble the Foulahs in appearance, but their heads are not so fine.

Leaving behind us the Rio Scarcies, we passed up the Sierra Leone river, whose shores offered a charming panorama; beautiful green hills studded with pleasantly situated villas surrounded by most luxuriant foliage. One might have said it was a corner of Switzerland washed by the sea.

A lighthouse in the Moorish style, towering above the clumps of trees with their foliage of varied hues, seems to invite you to enter this bay so bountifully adorned by Nature; but, alas! like the Siren of the ancients, this attractive exterior is but a fatal allurements to those who allow themselves to be enticed by it. Sierra Leone is reputed to be one of the most unhealthy places on the coast, one of the most fatal to Europeans.

We had scarcely cast anchor when we were surrounded by a crowd of boats manned by blacks, all of whom invited us by words and gestures to choose their boat to be rowed ashore. I ventured

on to the ladder, and in the twinkling of an eye I was seized by ten lusty arms and deposited on a cushion in the stern of one of the boats, and before there was time to remonstrate I was close to the shore. What was the use of being angry? Would any others have landed me better? These men had, though in a somewhat summary fashion, saved me the trouble of choice; and they looked so good-tempered and laughed so merrily, showing their white teeth, that I was ready to laugh too; and as I found on paying them that they did not take advantage of me, I said nothing, but availing myself of their robust shoulders jumped on shore and heartily forgave them.

Free-Town, the capital of the colony, is built in the form of an amphitheatre; the houses rise in terraces on the hillside, and are crowned by the barracks, whence there is a charming view. The European warehouses and offices are near the quays; the dwellings of the freed slaves, built of stone and roofed with thatch, form the suburbs; on the slopes of the hills, half hidden in verdure, are pleasant rural-looking villas which add to the beauty of the scene. On every hand there are gardens gay with flowers, where one sees with surprise rose-trees, lentanias, splendid oleanders, and fine bread-fruit-trees, proudly bearing their golden fruit, besides many importations from Europe, which have succeeded perfectly well.



I had letters for the French Consul, and to M. Dalmas, who holds the office of Consul for Italy, Spain, and the Low Countries. What was my astonishment to find that his partner was an old friend of mine whom I had lost sight of for several years, and whom I had not the least expectation of finding here. It was Louis Bicaise, whose name is not forgotten at Ghent, where he spent twenty years of his youth. He was born in Africa, his father being commandant at Rio-Pongo, and he sent his son to Belgium for education ; when he left Ghent he took with him the sympathies of all those who could appreciate his character. I was very glad to see him again, and had a long chat with him. It was a most agreeable surprise to hear an African at Sierra Leone talk of the home of my childhood, my family and friends, with whom he was almost as familiar as myself.

I took many walks with him in the town and neighbourhood, making the most of the opportunity of getting information about the manners and customs of the inhabitants, and as the steamer made a longer stay in port than usual, I was able to give attentive study to this colony, which is destined, I believe, to play an important part in the civilisation of Africa.

The market at Sierra Leone is very curious ; it is not confined within the building intended for it, but extends along the sides of the adjacent streets,



where it is held either at little stalls or on the ground, in which case the vendors spread out their wares in enormous calabashes and on artistically woven mats. There are plenty of vegetables and most delicious fruits ; barbadines, of which the seeds are eaten, sapodillas, like brown apples but with a delicious flavour, reminding one of strawberries ; splendid rows of golden bananas ; the avocado pear, of which the kernel is grown in water, like hyacinth bulbs. Then there is a sort of white pudding, made of wheat, called *fou-fou*, served on large banana leaves ; farther on, great quantities of kolas, large pink almonds, inclosed in green husks, consumed largely by Mussulmans ; when eaten in large quantities they produce a sort of intoxication, and therefore the followers of Mohammed substitute them for alcoholic drinks, the use of which is forbidden them, thus making a compromise with Allah.

The population of Sierra Leone is of a very mixed character. It was formed between 1830 and 1848, and composed chiefly of slaves captured by French and English cruisers, which gave chase to the slave-ships. They were taken to Sierra Leone, proclaimed free, and land given them to cultivate. France and England made themselves responsible for their independence, and furnished them with the means of improving and civilising themselves.

Many of them died on board the men-of-war

which transported them, others soon after their arrival, so that now their numbers scarcely reach fifty thousand. But they have a monopoly of nearly all occupations ; they preside in the courts of justice, and even have the press in their hands ; for there was a newspaper at Free-Town, printed in English ; but it may, perhaps, have collapsed by this time, for it was languishing when I was there.

I am sorry to say that there is much hostile feeling on the part of most of the freed-men toward the Europeans, although they owe everything to them. Woe to the man who forgets himself so far as to strike one of these black citizens, even if he has been insulted by him. He is had up before the courts and sentenced to severe punishment, and their lawyers, for they have lawyers, abuse him finely. Gratitude evidently weighs heavily on the hearts of these unfortunate people ; else why should they take a pleasure in making themselves, on every occasion, disagreeable to the Europeans, interfering in their affairs, and annoying and worrying them at every turn ? It would be ludicrous if it were not sad, to see nothing but ingratitude reaped for the benefits conferred.

Absurdly attired in clothes of European cut, with an umbrella in their hands to protect their black crops of hair, the freed-men go about nonchalantly seated in wheel chairs, drawn by one or

two negroes, their brothers, whom they regard with disdain and whom they treat, not like slaves, but like beasts of burden. Nothing can be more heart-rending than this sight.

The original natives of Sierra Leone and the surrounding country are often superior to the freedmen, intellectually and morally, although apparently savages. Some of them, the Akus and Egboës, have learnt handicrafts and agriculture. When they come to Free-Town they have a timid air, which is one of their characteristic features, although in war they are noted for their cruelty. The Timaneys, on the contrary, are lively, intelligent, and very honest. Although idolaters, they practise circumcision, as indeed do most of the African tribes.

Next come the tribes peopling the countries of Bulama and Sherboro, recently annexed to the colony ; they carry on a brisk trade with the Europeans, who are on very good terms with them ; they are clean, honest, and not cruel, and are distinguished for their courage and obliging dispositions.

The markets of Sierra Leone are frequented also by Korsors and Sousous, fine races of men, but restless and idle ; they profess fetish worship, and are wanting in honesty ; their women are incredibly degraded. They live in the northern part of the colony, opposite the island of Los.

Sierra Leone may be divided into three parts : the towns on the coast, York, Kent, and Banana Island, the inhabitants of which are very poor, and where but little trade is carried on ; the towns on the river, Hastings, Waterloo, Wellington, and Kissy, which is the most commercial part and the most important for European traffic ; lastly, the hill towns of Gloucester, Leicester, Regent, Charlotte, and Wilberforce, which are chiefly agricultural.

The little island of Balama, peopled by Portuguese blacks, called Manjagoës, supplies the colony with good labourers ; the Manjagoës are of small stature, but are excellent sailors.

The trade of Sierra Leone consists chiefly of palm oil, the greater part of which is brought by way of the river Roquelle ; the chief centre of the traffic in the interior is Porto-Logo. Gold dust and worked gold are also brought to Sierra Leone by the Foulahs and Mandingoes, but in small quantities. Stuffs, cotton goods, beads, household utensils, and fire-arms are the chief articles of exchange.

The Roquelle is a large river flowing north-north-east, in Fouta-Jallon, and it probably joins the Niger. Unfortunately it is not open to navigation, owing to the hostility of the Soulimans, who possess a large and well-disciplined army, and will not, at any price, give Europeans a right of way. They are also perpetually at war with the Kouran-

kos, whose principal towns, Kamala and Zima, are situated, the former on the left bank and the latter on the right bank, but more to the north of the Roquelle.

The religious fervour of these idol-worshippers equals the fanaticism of the Mussulmans ; their priests exercise great influence, and celebrate pompous rites on the occasions of the great events of life—births, marriages, and deaths. There is besides something more in it than merely the ruder forms of fetish worship ; there are certain religious associations which furnish the priests with the means of defending their faith against the efforts of Christian and Mussulman proselytism. The members of these associations are called *Pourrahs*, and their power extends into the heart of Africa.

One day, when in company with my friend Louis Bicaise I was studying the various native races, I was surprised to see about ten black women of a type new to me ; unlike the negresses, their heads were well formed, and their hair carefully combed ; their features, comparatively handsome, reminded me of the Foulahs, for whom I at first took them.

‘ Look at these women,’ I exclaimed, ‘ with only one ring in the left ear. Is it a religious symbol or a distinction of caste or race, and are these women Foulahs ? ’

‘ No,’ he replied, ‘ it is not a religious symbol,

nor are these women Foulahs ; they come from the Kouranko country, which has been many times devastated by the Foulahs, of whose yoke they have a horror. They have now regained their liberty, and it is from hatred of the Foulah women, who always wear long earrings, that these women wear only one in the left ear.' This is certainly a sort of patriotism which would not suit our European belles.

A whole book might be written about Sierra Leone, with its curious population, forming quite a mosaic, in which the most diverse types of manners, customs, and religions are jumbled together ; about the works which the whites have constructed, the missions and schools they have established ; these are very successful, and their influence extends far and wide. If a large number of the freedmen profit little or nothing by the benefits of civilisation, they are exceptions to the general rule ; and as the blacks generally attain to a position which is justly envied, it is to be hoped that sooner or later their example will be followed by all their compatriots. It is from Sierra Leone that African missionaries are sent out to evangelise the barbarous nations of the interior, and there also natives are to be found understanding European traffic and bookkeeping as well as Englishmen, and they are quite competent to manage the commercial establishments of the interior.

Should a line of factories be established to the interior of Africa, on the banks of the Niger, or in any other climate which does not permit Europeans to settle, it is at Sierra Leone that the men capable of managing them must be sought. If they were under the supervision of general agents, who would ply between Europe and Africa, and a system of bookkeeping were established which did not admit of fraud, they would be found the most useful auxiliaries. This is, in fact, the end and aim of the institutions at Sierra Leone ; to these Africa will be indebted for her regeneration, while Europe will owe to them the means of implanting her commerce without sacrificing the lives of her children.

But the 'Corisco' has just fired a gun, and in an hour's time she will have weighed anchor. I returned to her in haste, accompanied by my friend Bicaise, who insisted on seeing me on board. I parted from him with regret, and wished there were more men like him in Africa.

We soon left this bay, which is so deep that vessels of the heaviest tonnage can safely enter it ; and when fairly afloat I sat with my notebook before me, summing up the impressions of all I had seen and heard. We first passed the island of Sherboro, then Gallinas, an old haunt of the slave-traders, where Don Pedro Blanco, of Malaga, carried on his lucrative but abominable craft. The history of this trader in men is quite a romance,



full of horrors, cruelties, debauchery, and despair. Beyond Gallinas, Cape Mount displayed its well-wooded heights to view. Here the Grain Coast begins, and the country along its shores is the little republic of Liberia, founded in 1822 by American freed slaves. We cast anchor in a lovely bay, commanded by Cape Mesurado, at the foot of which, on the river of the same name, the capital, Monrovia, is built. A little further to the north flows the Rio-San-Paul, which takes its rise in the Kong mountains, to the north-east.

This little republic, copied from that of the United States (one of the stars of which it has adopted as an emblem), already has a history. It has had to sustain many struggles with its neighbours, the Weys, who inhabit Cape Mount and the country to the east of Gallinas. Fortunately, it had the Golas for allies, who ceded their territory to it, and it soon increased, partly by voluntary cession, purchase, or force of arms, when it had to contend with the restless and hostile tribes on its borders.

The principal exports are coffee and sugar-cane; the coffee is excellent, with a fine aroma, and costs about one shilling per pound. Most of the commercial houses at Monrovia are German or Dutch. The republic is governed by a president, who is a man of colour, said to be very agreeable and intelligent. In short, with a climate comparatively salubrious, Liberia is in the best condition

for prosperity, and it is surprising that its commerce and civilisation do not develop more rapidly.

Monrovia exports scarcely any palm oil, but Bassa, where we touched soon afterwards, produces it in abundance, and the country is full of magnificent palm-trees. There are numerous factories established along the coast, and our steamer often stopped before one or other of them ; every time we did so the shore was thick with negroes, who launched their canoes, loaded them with casks of palm oil, and came towards us with rapid strokes of their paddles, inciting themselves to their task with loud shout, or imitating the noise of the steam-engine when a steamer is about to start. Bassa also produces a little coffee and dye-woods, worth about 34*l.* the ton.

If I had not heard before of the coast of Kroo, I should have supposed when we touched at Cestos that the 'Corisco' had been boarded by idiots. We had scarcely stopped when we were surrounded by a swarm of canoes, and in less than no time over 200 blacks were on the bridge, screaming, shouting, and gesticulating ; then they began to quarrel, and from quarrels came to blows ; the combatants either threw themselves or were thrown into the sea, but they speedily regained their canoes. The rest assailed the captain, the mates, and crew all at once, helping themselves out by signs when the few words of English they knew were not quickly

at command. These fellows, unarmed and nearly naked, are Kroomen ; they were offering their services, and asking for work either on board or in the European factories on the coast. Every vessel generally engages a squad of them, commanded by one of their number, elected by themselves, who assumes the title of headman. They are employed in the hard labour which the heat and unhealthiness of the climate render unsuitable for English sailors. On leaving Kroo the European has to take good care of himself, and the large amount of traffic on this part of the coast, where establishments are numerous, makes it necessary to have a much larger number of men on board. The want is met by adding a negro crew to that of the vessel.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the Kroomen are all slaves ; there are slaves among them, but those on the coast are free ; a broad blue line tattooed from the forehead to the end of the nose is a sign of their independence. They hire themselves voluntarily, like workmen, by the year.

Following the advice that had been given me, I applied myself to select an escort among these good people, and as soon as they saw me, notebook in hand, beginning to make choice, more than a hundred rushed up to me. But the ranks were soon thinned when they found that they were wanted, not for an engagement in a factory, but for an exploring expedition. It was much worse

when I told them that the enterprise would be a dangerous one, demanding energy and courage; and when I said that I proposed to penetrate as far as possible into the interior, they nearly all made off. Happily they were all lusty fellows, and the twelve to whom I gave the preference were no less so than the rest, and had good honest faces. I installed them in the bows of the steamer, and gave them each a Remington gun, so that they might make acquaintance with the weapon and study its mechanism at leisure. They soon fraternised with the sailors, and I had no reason to complain of their behaviour in any respect during the passage.

All that part of the coast near Cape Palmas is very dangerous. Here and there at low tide rocks are visible, and vessels have often been wrecked on them. At the point to the east of the Cape we saw the hull of a three-masted steamer which was wrecked on the coast in 1873; it was the 'Europe,' one of the finest boats of the English Company, running between Liverpool and the West Coast of Africa. At first many attempts were made to get her afloat, but without success. The cargo was saved, but for five years the monster had been lying there, her broad sides out of the water, but sinking deeper and deeper in, and her tall masts in the air like the arms of a drowning man making a desperate effort to battle with the waves.

On leaving Cape Palmas you see along the coast little undulating wooded hills, which extend some way into the interior ; this is the country of the Greboës, who very much resemble the Kroomen. It is called the Ivory Coast, on account of the great trade in ivory which has been carried on for some years at this point.

We afterwards passed the country of Amatifoo and Fanti, the Gold Coast, and Dahomey, which I visited on my return, and of which hereafter. Just then, as we scarcely had to stop for trading purposes, I had merely a cursory view of Great Bassam and Assinec, where gold is found ; the Cape of Three-points, the Fort of El-mina, Cape Coast Castle, the scene of the Ashantee War, Winabah, Accra, Adda-Foah, Yellow Coffee, where we stopped to revictual, Whydah, Great and Little Popo, Porto Seguro on the coast of Dahomey, and lastly, Lagos, where you see European buildings for the last time.

On June 28, after having a glimpse of the large cutting made by the Nun, the principal branch of the Niger as it flows into the sea, the Rio-San-Nicolas, and the New Calabar, we entered the river Bonny, where the 'Corisco' makes a halt. I left her with my twelve men and my baggage, and from that time had to rely on my own resources.

## CHAPTER V.

BONNY—THE YELLOW FEVER—BRASS—KING OKIA—LOST AMONG THE  
CREEKS—DESPONDENCY OF THE CREW—AN AQUATIC LABYRINTH—  
WANT OF FRESH WATER—THE REEFS OF THE BAR—A NIGHT OF  
AGONY—AKASSA.

THROUGH the whole extent of the delta of the Niger, the European traders, instead of living on shore, which is very unhealthy, establish themselves on pontoons anchored at the mouths of the rivers. They are large dismasted vessels, of which the forepart is so arranged as to serve for living in. The rest, covered in with a roof of zinc or sail-cloth, is used for all the purposes of commerce. It serves at once as a warehouse for palm oil, brought by the natives in their canoes, in exchange for European products, and a factory for the preparation of it. In a word, the trader lives on the water, transacts his business there, and very seldom goes ashore, I may say, only when absolutely obliged to do so.

For a long time Bonny was the favourite resort of the negroes, who took their cargoes of *ebony* there—the well-known term for slaves among the traffickers in men. The inhabitants, however, of



these regions were cannibals, and not far from the coast tribes are still found among whom human flesh is a favourite repast.

The present King of Bonny, George Peppel, was brought up in England; he dresses in the European fashion, trades in palm oil, and devotes to it a little steamer of which the English have made him a present. The natives do not much resemble their king; they are still savages and heathens, and even their chiefs have but a faint trace of civilisation. In fact, George Peppel is rather an English agent than a king; and a subaltern chief of this sort has more power and influence over his people than a king. The natives go quite naked; even the women do not wear a cloth round their loins till after they are married. The negro town is unhealthy, surrounded as it is by pestilential marshes. The muddy and dirty streets are full of unmounted guns of various calibre, of which these big children are very proud, although they cannot possibly make any use of them, for they are worn-out pieces, sold to them by the English to gratify their bellicose childishness. In the middle of the town there is a temple—a sort of trellis-work cage—where skulls, human skeletons, wooden idols, elephants' heads, dried serpents, and fetishes, fervently revered by the people, are heaped up together.

Ju-Ju-Town, a locality situated on the other



side of the river, where the ministers of the idolatrous worship live, forms a sort of rampart against the civilising and Christianising invasion of Europeans.

The money of Bonny consists of a sort of little bronze horse-shoe, called *manilla*, about an inch thick, and worth 25 centimes ; cowries (*Cyprea moneta*) are also taken, and are current throughout the basin of the Niger and Central Africa.

The natives of Bonny call their country Okoloma ; their neighbours of Ebo call it Okoloba, Obani, and Ebani ; and the natives of Aboh, Osiminuku. It appears as if Bonny was originally peopled by slaves from Ebo ; nevertheless the present inhabitants have a language of their own, which is also spoken by the natives of New Calabar, a region bordering on Bonny.

In spite of all precautions, and although living on pontoons, the European traders of Bonny suffer from the fatal influence of the climate. When the wind, blowing from the interior, brings the emanations with which it is charged to the mouth of the river, an indefinable *malaise* takes possession of the most resolute Europeans, and if, every day at the retreat of the tide, the sea-breeze does not blow away the miasma they have been breathing and refresh the lungs, no one can resist the effects of the climate. In 1873 the sea-breeze ceased to blow for a fortnight ; there was nothing but the pesti-

lential air of the marshes to breathe, and it was charged with fetid vapours; not a day passed without some of the whites falling ill, and one morning they were attacked by yellow fever. There were forty-six of them, all robust men, and inured to malaria and privations. Four only escaped the pestilence; these were, Captain Gierris, Mr. Knight, Dr. Macdreal, and a passing English trader. The two former are still at Bonny. This yellow fever is a terrible scourge. The natives, in their fanciful language, call it the 'harvest of the white men,' and the name is but too appropriate. It begins with pains in the loins, and a torpor of all the faculties, accompanied by white and greenish vomiting, to which complete prostration succeeds. The vomit then becomes blackish. This is a sign of the approach of death. In a few hours the patient is a corpse, and, as if the pestilence glutted over its prey, no sooner is life extinct, so rapid is decomposition that the body turns black and yellow. Recovery is very rare; once the symptoms are well defined, it is all over with you. And the natives laugh when they see you die. Their gods, they say, will not suffer the white man to take root in Africa, and, whether he will or no, he who defies the gods must perish.

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would take me to it, I went there. But before reaching it I passed through Opobo, where I saw the king Ja-Ja, one of the native chiefs most friendly to Europeans. He has had a shelter built in his town appropriated exclusively to the whites who go there. He carries on a large trade in palm oil, is rich and powerful, feared and respected by his neighbours, and renders essential services to commerce and civilisation.

No sooner had I reached Brass than I took measures for reaching the Niger in a half-decked canoe, manned by my twelve Kroomen, containing my luggage and provisions. My first care was to make inquiry for a guide, but the King of Brass alone could furnish me with one, and I therefore sent for him to the factory of M. Soncké, who had offered me hospitality. He soon arrived with great pomp in a canoe rowed by thirty negroes, the bow of which was ornamented with a huge flag of many colours.

After the customary salutations and the presentation of diverse gifts, intended to make me welcome, I asked him for a guide to conduct me to the Niger by the creeks of Brass. At first he took it for a jest, but, as I insisted, he was quite disconcerted, and even began to tremble. At last, having requested him to give me an answer, he exclaimed that I was asking an impossibility. I was indignant, he persisted, I grew angry, and threatened

him. 'You can,' he replied, 'kill me, sack my town, and reduce my tribe. I know the white man is strong, but I would rather suffer all this than accede to your demand. If I, Okia, were to give you a guide to-day, to-morrow the natives on the lower Niger would declare war against me, and I should certainly pay for the culpable imprudence with my head.'

I saw that there was nothing to hope for in face of this determination, inspired as it was by fear; and fuming against the sable monarch's cowardice, I gave up all hope of obtaining a guide. Nevertheless, trusting in the courage of my Kroomen and the accuracy of my compass, I resolved to proceed.

My departure from Brass was a sad one. Sympathy soon grows up between Europeans in these wild and melancholy regions, so fruitful in perils and miseries of all sorts. M. Soncké had become my friend, and in bidding me adieu he could not conceal his anxieties.

'I know,' he said, 'that the natives get to the Niger in thirty-two hours by the creeks: make this the basis of your calculations. If in two days you are not there, you will have missed your way, and then'——

'Thanks,' I replied, 'thanks. Adieu.'

'You will not then give up your mad scheme and start for Akassa?'

‘No, I am not going to turn back after coming thus far. Besides, I am determined to explore these creeks. Adieu, my dear Soncké.’

And at a signal from me my rowers vigorously parted the waters, and the canoe was at once in one of the numerous circuits which intersect the swampy country of Brass or Nimbé.

Nothing can exceed the sullen gloom of these creeks of the delta of the Niger, with their mangroves, whose bony roots plunge into the water like the claws of enormous spiders. Not the cry of a bird is to be heard, not a flower nor a blade of grass to be seen. It is an aquatic maze, bordered by aquatic trees, growing in a sticky slime, in which it is impossible to set foot without running the risk of disappearing in the mud. The creek I entered on setting out is very large, the direction was good, the needle pointed N.N.W. If it is the same everywhere, thought I, to-morrow I shall reach the Niger.

We stopped at nightfall. For want of anything better, I lay down in the stern of the canoe, and, wrapped in my burnous, courted the sleep of which I stood so much in need. Alas ! I did not once close my eyes. The mosquitoes, which had been cruelly tormenting me all day, now that the boat was motionless, pounced upon me, fierce, tenacious, and famishing. They are not the large European mosquitoes, nor even like those of Sene-

gambia, whose buzzing gives warning of their evil intent, and from which you can defend yourself by energetic fanning or a good mosquito-curtain ; they are called sandflies, are almost invisible, and penetrate through the finest muslin ; they are black, and their sting is so venomous that inflammation follows immediately. Hundreds of them pitched upon me. Face and hands perforated by their stings, I punished their audacity in vain ; hundreds more immediately came to the rescue, opposing a bold front to my wrath, as if content to pay with their lives for the pleasure of tormenting me for a moment. All night long I struggled against these invisible and constantly reinforced legions. I became furious ; fatigue, pain, and annoyance put me in a fever ; I scratched my face and hands, for the venom of these wretched insects caused intolerable irritation. What a night ! and by what a morning it was succeeded !

A raw, humid, and faint dawn crept among the lank branches of the mangroves, and by degrees lighted up the aquatic track in which we were rowing. Not the note of a bird to salute the morn, not even the cry of a wild beast, nothing but the lugubrious calm of drowning nature.

‘To your oars, children !—We shall soon see the beautiful Niger.’

And my Kroomen seized their oars, and by their vigorous efforts the canoe continued its course.

side of the river, where the ministers of the idolatrous worship live, forms a sort of rampart against the civilising and Christianising invasion of Europeans.

The money of Bonny consists of a sort of little bronze horse-shoe, called *manilla*, about an inch thick, and worth 25 centimes ; cowries (*Cyprea moneta*) are also taken, and are current throughout the basin of the Niger and Central Africa.

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negroes, even if they attacked me ; but nothing, nothing was to be seen, not even a wild beast.

It was a fearful night ; these eternal creeks seemed like Dante's hell ; an invisible hand traced before my eyes this sentence on the damned : ' O ye who open this door, leave hope upon the threshold, *lasciate ogni speranza !* '

The fourth day brought no change ; we were lost indeed.

All of a sudden, about four o'clock in the afternoon, my Kroomen, without orders, left off rowing ; sullen and silent, their eyes heavy with sleep, they seemed to have given way to profound despondency.

' Come, my children,' I exclaimed, ' a little more energy ! one last effort ! Courageous Kroomen, do you not wish to see your fine country of Grand-Cess again, your forests of palms, and the sand of your shores ? Will you perish here, like weak women ? Courage, courage ! We are near terra firma ; there we shall find sheep and oxen and golden bananas ! The Niger is not far off ! Courage, strong men of Kroo ! take up your oars again, row on, row on ! ' And in feverish haste I seized an oar myself. Encouraged by my example, they rowed on till evening. But, alas ! the promised land fled from us, there seemed still to be no end in view.

About one o'clock, on the fifth day, the creek

To face page 96.



'Courage, strong men of Kroo! row on, row on!'—(Page 96.)



in which we were rowing suddenly widened considerably.

‘We are just at the goal,’ I said to my men ; ‘one more effort, I entreat you!’ The prospect renewed their energies and they rowed vigorously, not only till evening, but even during part of the night, for the breadth of the course and the brightness of the moon allowed of our proceeding without fear of getting into some clump of mangroves, from which we should not have extricated ourselves without difficulty and danger.

I was, however, far from sharing the confidence with which I endeavoured to inspire my men ; my eyes were fixed on the compass, which obstinately pointed south, while if the creek led to the Niger it ought to have pointed direct north. And even the breadth of the channel was perplexing, for it was not like the affluent of a river. Sometimes, even, there was something of a current observable ; I should have said it was a branch of a river flowing towards the sea. During the day I tested the water ; it was brackish. Now if we were near the Niger, as high up as Approprama, Horse-shoe Bank, or even Point Nicoll, the tide would not be perceptible. Decidedly this creek would take us to the ocean. But to what point ? and when should we get there ? Our fresh water was failing ; there were but three quarts left, and there were thirteen of us. The Kroomen will drink it all up



at one draught to-morrow, and then what will become of us ? At all hazards, I filled two bottles with it, which I kept concealed near me.

The next morning, in fact, the men drank all that was left, and, as if from habit, replaced it by the water from the creek, without in the least suspecting that it was salt. Of what use was it to tell them ? I knew they would despair when they learnt that we had no more fresh water ; I knew that in face of our distress there was every reason to dread their failure and irritation. The time would come soon enough, and perhaps before anyone was thirsty we might see land, or meet a native canoe, from which we might get water, or learn where it was to be found.

About ten in the morning the youngest of my rowers (his *nom de guerre* was Four-feet) wanted refreshment ; he at once spat out the mouthful he had taken, exclaiming, 'Salt water!—salt water!' Immediately the canoe stopped, and all the rowers took a little water in the hollow of their hands and put it to their lips ; they regarded me in sullen silence, with desperate and threatening looks.

'O Master!' cried Four-feet, 'you have brought us here then that we may die!'

'Kroomen,' I replied, 'listen to me ; have I not shared all your fatigues and privations ? Do you see me despair, though I am not accustomed to hardships like you ? If I keep my courage up,

it is because I know that we shall arrive all right. I knew this route, but I wanted to trace it exactly on the map, that is why you have seen me study it at all the turnings. We are now near the sea, and there, at the white men's stores, I will give you what will make you forget all your sufferings. A few hours' more patience!'

And, as the evening before, I grasped an oar myself, and my example encouraged them. We made good progress.

About two in the afternoon, my throat was so dry that I was panting. The men also seemed to be tormented with excessive thirst, but they said nothing. Showing them the two bottles I had concealed, and having taken a mouthful myself, I said to them: 'Here is some fresh water which I have kept in reserve, foreseeing that it would come in just when it was wanted; let each one refresh himself with it and we will row energetically; we shall soon be there.'

Although I spoke thus to them, I was greatly perplexed. The water became more and more salt, and everything proclaimed that we were nearing the sea. It was at the same time, a *contretemps* and our salvation. But, I said to myself, if we do not reach it this evening we are lost.

The Kroomen had courageously seized their oars again, and when night fell, knowing that their



lives depended on this supreme effort, they continued rowing.

I had taken my seat at the helm ; a little dark lantern lighted the compass, which I only took my eyes off to look at the horizon which was spread out to infinitude before me.

All of a sudden I thought I saw a light in the distance ; I could hardly believe my eyes—perhaps it was a star—perhaps my eyes were dazzled. I called Sea-breeze, the headman among the rowers, and asked him if he did not see something down there?

‘ I see,’ he said, ‘ I see—some fire !’

‘ Hurrah !’ cried the whole crew. ‘ Long live the white man !’

And the canoe, impelled by their vigorous arms, flew with unwonted speed. The light soon became more distinct, and at the same time the creek widened considerably. We were doubtless at the embouchure of one of the streams in the delta of the Niger, and the light must be on a barge or in a European factory. I steered for this blessed beacon, but it seemed to fly to the right of us. Before long, however, I was convinced that it was we who were turned from right to left by an impetuous current. In vain the rowers tried to stem it. They used their utmost efforts, but we were obviously being carried far from the shore and the light which had revived our spirits.

At the same time there appeared to me to be a white line not more than twenty yards or so off, and a rumbling noise warned me of a new danger. This white line was caused by the reefs of the bar which exist at the entrance of all the rivers of the delta, and, carried away by the violence of the current, we should infallibly be wrecked.

‘Cast anchor! cast anchor!’ I exclaimed, while I lent a hand myself.

We were going at such speed that the shock of stopping made us fall backwards. The heavy iron ring by which the chain was fastened to the boat would soon yield to the force of the waters.

They were indeed long hours of agony which I passed at that time. Our safety depended on the strength of our anchor. If a single link should give way under the blows it received every moment from the furious current, it was all over with us. I had had neither the solidity of the chain nor the anchor tested at Brass, and I was far from being at ease on the subject.

Unconscious of danger, the Kroomen slept; the fire burning at a distance promised them water and food next day, and that was all they cared for. It was my sixth night without sleep, but I scarcely felt fatigue; all my attention was concentrated on the white line a few paces from us, which seemed to be on the watch for us.

About four in the morning the violence of the

current abated ; it was the turn of the tide. A little while afterwards our canoe began to turn and presented its prow towards the sea, to the reefs ; the tide was going out. I had the anchor raised, and taking advantage of the current to ascend to the mouth of the river, we rowed towards a factory, the whitewashed sheds of which emerged out of the darkness.

We were saved !

On our arrival, I learnt that we were at Akassa. The current which had nearly precipitated us on the rocks was that of the Nun, which flows into the sea here. It was to avoid this current, which it is impossible to stem in a boat, that I had wished to reach the Niger by the creeks of Brass. Things being as they were, there was but one course to take, to ask the manager of the African Company to be good enough to transport me, my men, and my baggage to Onitsha on the Niger, where the little steamer 'Victoria' was going that day, and to relieve me of my canoe. Mr. Hook kindly acceded to my request, warning me, however, that the steamer was to start at eight o'clock.

Akassa, situated in  $4^{\circ} 19' 3''$  north latitude and  $3^{\circ} 32' 30''$  east of the meridian of Paris, deserves special mention on account of the importance it will acquire as soon as ever the Niger and Benueh are opened to European commerce. It is there that a factory must be at first established.

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Little steamers will navigate between this point and the warehouses which will be established along the course of these two rivers. The native products will be concentrated there and await the arrival of the little steamers from Bonny, on which they will be embarked for Europe. Sailing boats might even be used, for at high tide the entrance to the harbour is convenient. In short, Akassa will one day be the point of union between our countries and the factories of the Niger and Benueh; situated as it is, it could at all times communicate with the establishments founded on the shores of both rivers, and, by means of the regular service of the English steamers, keep up constant intercourse with Europe.

## CHAPTER VI.

TWO DESERTERS—THE NUN RIVER—HAIL TO THE NIGER!—HOSTILE VILLAGES—CONFLICTS AND CHASTISEMENT—THE RIVER WARI—ABOH—A TRIBE OF PIRATES—N'DONI—FACTORIES ON THE NIGER—AN OUTPOST OF SAVAGES—OXEN—OSSOMARE—KING ODOGOU.

AT eight o'clock the 'Victoria' weighed anchor and made for the embouchure of the Nun, which only differs from the surrounding creeks by its width and the rapidity of the current.

On mustering my men just before starting, I found that two had deserted. After the emotions of the last few days they were doubtless frightened at the idea of a journey into the interior. Happily they were the least valuable of my escort. Four-feet was one, who had been the first to suffer from thirst in the creeks, and had shown more cowardice than any of them.

The remaining ten each had a nickname, given at the time when he began to work—for among these people name is not a question of father, mother, or family. They were, Sea-breeze, Bottled-beer, Eat-well, Go-ahead, Good-looking, Port, Star-board, Black-Jack, Full-steam, and Go-fast, to whom I gave the surname of Orange, and whom I pre-



ferred to his companions from his courage, and the affection he showed for me.

In course of time, from working in the European factories and on board steamers, the natives of Kroo become familiar to some extent with English, and as they are best acquainted with the sailor's craft, when they adopt a proper name they generally choose one which has something to do with it. As I have said, they themselves elect a head man; once the choice made, although he works like the rest, they owe him absolute obedience. Sea-breeze was the captain of my little troop.

The 'Victoria' had entered the Nun. From the mouth to the Isle of Darwall it is scarcely two leagues and a half. There it makes a very decided bend, awkward for vessels; we, however, got through it successfully, and the Niger was before us.

The transition is so great, the aspect of nature changes so suddenly, that it is like the drawing up of a curtain, or a transformation scene at a theatre. No more mangroves, no more of the sombre and monotonous vegetation of the creeks, no more windings, no more aquatic labyrinths, no chance of losing your way. It is a grand and beautiful river, as it rolls majestically along widening at every step, while its banks display all the splendours of the African flora. The birds have reappeared and enliven us with their songs or cries.

In the distance the proud cocoa-nut palms lift up their superb heads against the azure sky; the dwarf date palms bathe their curious foliage in the waters; sitting motionless on the young green trunks, the pale-blue kingfishers keep watch for incautious little fish or wandering flies; a thousand birds with variegated plumage, some yellow with a black necklace, others with gay crests, flutter joyously among the trees; great *bombax* or cotton-trees sway to and fro, their thick foliage forming clusters, manchineels whose red blossoms set off the verdure, and, finally, the bananas whose large leaves reveal the existence of a negro village behind the screen which they form. It is a charming aspect of nature, and I was all the more able to appreciate it after the gloomy solitude from which I had just emerged.

We soon passed Sunday Island, so named by Baikie in 1854, then making his first voyage on the Niger, as well as Nicoll Point. At half-past eleven we reach the negro villages of Liambra, on the left bank of the river. After this they multiply on both sides. It is a pleasant and rural sight. The huts scattered among the foliage are for the most part round, like those of Kayor. Around the inhabited spots, splendid banana-trees (*Musa paradisiaca*) bend beneath the load of gigantic golden fruit or plantains, larger, but not so good, as the smaller ones. The beautiful cocoa-



nut palms also grow around the huts, for in Africa they are to be found wherever there is a human being, whose inseparable companions they seem to be.

A little further up, opposite Akito, which is on the right side, and a little above Appropriama, on the left side, is the famous Horse-shoe Bank, so called because of the great curve which the Niger makes at this spot. In 1876 the natives took advantage of it to bar the river; they stretched a chain over eight hundred feet long from one shore to the other, and drove in piles up to the level of the water, hoping thus to catch the steamers which would run against them, no one suspecting any criminal design. Thanks to slackening speed which every vessel does on nearing the bend, the trap was discovered when the first steamer came along, and the natives who were watching her from the shore or from their canoes, ready for pillage when she ran aground, were confounded to see her backing with full steam on. The English authorities were immediately informed, and a frigate was sent to destroy the barrier by firing a cannon. The natives were foolish enough to make resistance, and a combat ensued which was fatal to them; all those who had taken arms were shot, and the neighbouring villages reduced to ashes. The inhabitants fled in consternation into the woods, but scarcely had the victors departed than they rebuilt their huts in

the same spot. They are more circumspect now, and would not venture to attack steamers, of which they have a salutary dread. Still it would not be wise to venture in a canoe in these parts, and, even if a steamer were to run upon a sandbank, the crew would assuredly be massacred and the cargo pillaged.

The hostility of the tribes of the Lower Niger is well known. Thus along a course of about thirty leagues, that is, from the mouth to N'Doni, no Europeans have been able to establish settlements on either bank of the river. The chiefs and the priests of the tribes which inhabit them have an interest in preventing foreigners from coming themselves to trade on the Niger. Up to the most recent times in fact they had been the sole mediators between the English and the natives ; they went alone in their own canoes, by creeks they knew, to the offices of the whites at Brass, Akassa, New Calabar, and Benin, where they bought arms, calicoes, and beads, which they sold again in the interior, and made a great profit on them. Now when the Europeans undertook to trade directly themselves, the chiefs and the priests, thinking their future compromised, fanatically stirred up their followers and made them enemies of the white men, whether merchants or missionaries. Moreover, so long as the navigable creeks connect the Niger with the rivers of the delta, the natives are hostile

to Europeans. At N'Doni there is no longer any interior communication from the river; from this point the stranger is loaded with benefits, and many factories have been established at the most important points.

The region more or less hostile to Europeans is called Oru; it begins in latitude  $4^{\circ} 10' 12''$  north and extends to the environs of Aboh, about latitude  $5^{\circ} 20' 10''$  north. The principal negro village on the left shore is Akito, which is now the centre of the commerce of Brass and the entrepôt of the native trade of the Lower Niger. It was cannonaded and burnt in 1876, but rebuilt shortly afterwards. When I passed it, the king, surrounded by his chiefs, was sitting under a shed, and they all regarded me with angry glances. But the rude lesson which they have received from the English prevents them from giving way to their thievish and warlike propensities; still, it is impossible to trade with them, at any rate at present.

Higher up, on the same side, come the villages of Appropama and Angiama. The latter was formerly the centre of the important commerce of Brass, but the quarrelsome character of the natives has so intimidated the negro traders that they have transferred the seat of their business to Akito.

Higher up still, but on the right side, is the mouth of the river Ogubari, which flows towards the south-west, and not far from it, in the middle

of the river, is Tuesday Island, so named by Baikie ; rounded off and graduated, like a bouquet, it has a very picturesque effect.

The sandbanks and verdant islands scattered about the Niger, for the most part shift about from the force of the current and according to the seasons, which makes navigation dangerous, for one and another forms and disappears, according to the caprice of the current, so that it is impossible to assign them an exact place on the maps. It is also to be remarked that from November to July, that is, during the summer months, the Niger falls thirty-five feet, as it is well known the Nile does, in Egypt, at the same period of the year.

Above Tuesday Island, the village of Ekebri, which appears on the right side of the river, is precisely like those we have seen before. I observed that the natives of these regions tattoo themselves to a great extent, and by means of a sort of red ochre they mottle their bodies with the most fantastic arabesques.

To Ekebri succeeds Ekole, on the left bank, and Kpétama on the right, near Taylor Creek, which was explored by Baikie, but he did not discover the outlet ; next come the large villages of Sabogrega and Gamatu, famous for the foolish resistance which they made in 1876 to the British ships of war, which came to avenge the outrages made by the natives on some merchant steamers. Among other



misdeeds, they had captured a vessel with an English explorer, Mr. Cliff, on board, whom, with his escort, they took prisoner, and demanded a ransom. On this being paid they were set at liberty, but the frigate which delivered them thought proper, for the sake of example, to take vengeance on the culprits. They defended themselves with surprising spirit; from their canoes, or, posted on the bank, they replied to the aggressors with showers of arrows, javelins, stones, and fire-arms; an officer and several English soldiers were killed, but the Europeans, of course, were victorious. Disheartened by their losses, the natives fled into the creeks and the neighbouring forests, abandoning their villages to the enemy; they were burnt, but were soon afterwards rebuilt.

A little further on the villages of Kaïama extend along the right bank for the length of a mile and a quarter. The inhabitants are also hostile to Europeans. At the time of the rising, in 1876, some of the people of Sabogréga and Gramatu allied themselves with them to attack the English, who, in order to punish them, destroyed their haunts from the foundations.

Kaïama comprises three distinct groups; the southern part, which is the residence of the king, the centre village or Olobari, and the northern one, Opotolo. The royal residence is composed of three vast buildings, the walls of which are made of

lattice work, filled up with moist sand, which, as it hardens, forms a sort of plaster ; but buildings of this kind are soon damaged by the rain, and to preserve them they cover them with a sort of projecting thatch, supported by the trunks of young palm-trees.

When I passed by this palace great was my surprise to see a door, evidently of European manufacture, painted green, with mouldings and a handle. But the mystery was soon solved ; the year before the English steamer, 'Sultan of Sokoto,' was wrecked on the southern point of the Isle of Sterling, a little way from the villages of Kaiama ; the crew succeeded in saving themselves, but the wreck was pillaged, and the door which now adorns the palace was part of it. The king was sitting before the fetish temple clothed in a long white *boubou* ; he was surrounded by several chiefs. They all cast defiant glances at me, but without showing their hostility in any other way.

On the Island of Sterling there is a small village, burnt last year by an English ship of war. At first the steamers took the right side of the river, but now they avoid it as too dangerous, turn to the left of the island, and go along the left shore.

From Akassa to the Isle of Sterling we were attacked by huge brown or greenish flies, like gad-flies. The natives call them *eroos*. Their sting is very painful, and such is the strength of their dart

that it even pierces the skin through cloth clothes, and immediately causes a blister to rise, full of venom.

Above the Isle of Sterling, I saw the five villages of Imblama, all on the right bank. The year before the three in the centre were bombarded and destroyed ; the inhabitants took refuge in the creek, which can be seen from the northern point, near the last of the five, which takes a north-west course, communicating, probably, with the river Wari.

Further on, opposite the three villages of Agheri, which in 1876 were burnt by the English, we left on the right a large sandbank, covered in many parts with thick herbage ; the steamer on board of which I was ran aground on it the year before, and remained nine weeks in this cruel position, hoping that at a rise of the water she would get off ; the Europeans on board defended themselves successfully from the attacks of the natives, but the engineer died of fever.

Then comes Truro Island, and in latitude  $5^{\circ} 19' 30''$  north, on the right side, the large mouth of the river Wari, which waters a large village of the same name to the west, in the interior, rejoins the Rio-Benin, and falls into the sea at Cape Formoso. It is one of the most important arteries in these regions, and there is a considerable traffic on its banks in palm oil and ivory. Beecroft and



James Pinnock went up it, the former in 1841, the latter in 1872 ; but the Europeans have not yet established offices there. The black traders reign supreme, and seem to make immense profits.

It appears to me that a great effort should be made to gain a footing in these parts, for the country watered by the Wari is magnificent. This large river would greatly facilitate trade, and, once settled there, the whites would not fail to overcome, by kind treatment, the hostility of the tribes on the shores of the Lower Niger, who up to this time refuse to trade with them.

From this spot the Niger widens sensibly : up to this point it is only from 650 to 800 feet wide ; here it is over three-quarters of a mile, and further on it widens still more. The force of the current at the mouth of the Wari is at least four knots an hour.

We passed in turn the villages of Osodoni, Ofinemanga, Epatami, on the left bank, and Utok, Egabo, Adiawi, and Otumpa, on the right bank. On leaving Otumpa the banks of the river, which have been nearly flush with the water, with green plains or thickets dipping into it on both sides, now change their aspect ; hills come in view, now and then rocks appear on the shores, and the current is always very rapid.

Opposite the island of Avgo I distinguished on the left shore a rather narrow creek, but it

widens by degrees, and leads to the town of Aboh, about a mile in the interior.

Aboh is the most active, the most commercial, and the most populous town in the country ; unfortunately, the inhabitants are treacherous, covetous, and hostile to Europeans. They are eight miles from everybody else, and are for the most part poor. In order to procure the means of subsistence they make perpetual raids, which have made them the terror of their neighbours. A tribe of pirates, their life is passed on the water, and they are always cruising and in arms.

Power is elective among them, and whenever the throne becomes vacant fierce contests take place among the claimants for it. The first care of the victor is immediately to put all his adversaries to death, beginning with his chief competitor.

It is just the contrary of what often happens in Europe, where the rightful heir goes into exile and the pretender remains. These bloody conflicts give rise to severe reprisals, and to frequent plots against the life of the king, of whom they often rid themselves by means of poison. The melancholy end of most of his predecessors fills him with suspicion, and he never touches food without having it first tasted by somebody about him.

The men of Aboh are easily recognised by their tattooing ; the men make three parallel incisions

on the temples from the eye to the lobe of the ear, and three others above the nose and between the eyes, but these are horizontal. The women tattoo in the same way the lower part of the forehead, but they make six incisions at least on the temples.

Men, women, and children wear on their arms and legs heavy rings of ivory or copper, of which they are very proud. They speak the Ebo or Egbo language. It is here that the interesting country of this name begins, which I intended to study more particularly at Onitsha, when I should plunge into the depths of the country.

Above the creek that leads to Aboh I saw in the middle of the river the Charlotte Islands, and on the banks a cluster of little villages scattered among the verdure. The inhabitants appeared to be full of good-will towards the whites, for they invited us by calls and signs to stop, and seemed very desirous to trade with us. It is at this place that the manifest hostility of the tribes of the Lower Niger ceases.

At length, in latitude  $5^{\circ} 37' 30''$  north, we came to N'Doni, where the African Company has an office, of which the managers and employés are natives of Sierra Leone. This is the case with all the European establishments, factories, or missions founded on the Niger ; all are served by blacks, on account of the impossibility to Europeans of living in this deadly climate.

The negro village of N'Doni is situated about one-third of a mile from the Niger, and it seemed to me to be of some importance. The town and factories are on both sides of a creek which flows into the New Calabar, the native name of which is Bom. Some of the maps are wrong in placing N'Doni above this creek; it is most certainly below it; the little village on the point opposite is insignificant.

The population of N'Doni is very favourable to Europeans, which is quite intelligible, for it would at all times be difficult, and in the dry season impossible, for them to communicate with the delta of the Niger; they therefore think themselves happy to be visited by Europeans and to trade with them.

Leaving N'Doni, we came to Abrugada, on the opposite shore, where there is also a factory; but the negro village is much less considerable than N'Doni. At Abrugada the Niger is really majestic; it is nearly a mile wide, and the current is very impetuous, so that in the windings in the middle of the river it doubles back along the shores. The natives have observed this phenomenon, and take advantage of it for ascending the river, keeping close to the banks in their frail canoes.

After Abrugada we see in turn the villages of Odugiri in a bay on the left side, as well as some factories; those of Ogu, on the opposite side, and

above Odugiri, in latitude  $5^{\circ} 20' 3''$  north the embouchure of the river Egboma, more than 800 yards wide, flowing towards the west to rejoin the New Calabar.

Further on numbers of little villages peep forth from among the foliage, surrounded by the customary bananas ; the inhabitants showed us their fists, brandishing their arms before their faces. I thought at first that it was a sign of hostility, and was astonished at the coolness with which they displayed it. But this was a mistake. It is their mode of salutation, and of showing their sentiments of kindness and respect, just as we salute with the hand some illustrious man as he passes, or send a last adieu to a departing friend. Nevertheless, the first time that one receives a greeting of this sort, the clenched fist produces a peculiar effect. However, I soon became accustomed to it, and in my turn learnt to brandish my fist as a mode of salutation, and it did not fail to awaken a sudden sympathy for the white man who thus identified himself with local usages.

On ascending to the villages of Akra-Utiri, to my great surprise I saw animals grazing along by the river ; they are oxen, splendid oxen, the first I saw on the Niger, for in the delta, as I have said, there are no quadrupeds. Here, on the contrary, where the soil is fertile and produces rich pasture, oxen and buffaloes abound. This gives the name



of Ox Island to the large island above Akra-Utiri. Above this is Hawkins Island, and on the left shore the villages of Obagwi.

They were scarcely passed when, at the extremity of a large sandbank, I perceived a group of natives, ranged round a large fire, apparently cooking their food. Twisted mats, hanging from a stake fixed into the ground, served them for tents, and the same mats shelter them from the rain when they take to their canoes. Banners of variegated hues, and flags made of pieces of white calico, on which are roughly designed the outlines of animals and cabalistic signs, flutter in the wind, and in the canoes moored along the sandbank are heaped up weapons of war pell-mell with yams, fish, and birds. Several canoes are armed with a gun, so fixed to the prow that if fired off they would certainly be capsized.

On seeing this multitude in arms, restless and excited, I imagined that they might be about to celebrate a human sacrifice, but I was mistaken. It was an advance guard of the army from Ossomare, having orders to watch the river, to capture all the canoes belonging to Aboh going towards the markets of the Niger which might pass, to seize their arms, stores, and merchandise, and mercilessly to massacre the crews, men, women, and children. All this was to avenge a like act of which the men of Aboh had recently been guilty. They, as has

been stated, live by piracy, and make continual raids on the territories of their neighbours.

About as high as the northern point of Ox Island, I distinguished the villages of Okpaï on the right bank, higher up Osutshi, and before long we reach Ossomare, situated on the left bank, in latitude  $5^{\circ} 53' 4''$  north. There are several factories, and the English have founded a mission there, in which natives from Sierra Leone officiate, as they do in the houses of business. All these are built on the shores of the river, while the negro village, peopled by about 1,500 souls, stretches into the interior.

I paid a visit to Odogou, King of Ossomare ; he is a man of six feet high, apparently about fifty years of age, clad in a stuff lamba not fastened together in any way, and which, to his cost, fluttered about in the wind. This King Odogou is a rude warrior—rough, brutal, and energetic—he prefers the lance to the gun, and the javelin to the knife ; he is his own policeman, and combats his enemies in person. If he is wanting in dignity he makes up for it by bravery, and he seems to be both feared and beloved.

I was talking with him as we walked along by the river, when his eye fell on a group of natives who were resting ; without saying a word he fell upon them, raised his great bamboo cane, struck them with it again and again, and pursued them to



the factory from which they had made their escape from idleness. Odogou then returned to me with shouts of laughter, telling me he was obliged to do everything himself.

‘You must have met near here,’ he added, ‘a group of warriors who are keeping guard on the river; it is the advance guard of my army. Tomorrow I am going to set out at the head of my troops, and to administer a sharp lesson to these Aboh people, who last month captured the canoe of one of my subjects, and massacred a man, two women, and a child who were on board. Ah! Osimirin’ (the native name for the Niger) ‘will be red with blood! Tremble, people of Aboh, race of thieves and bandits!’

And the brave Odogou flourished his bamboo in the air, and I can truly say that in his hands it became a formidable weapon. Yes, people of Aboh, you may well tremble!

## CHAPTER VII.

ALENSO AND OKO—ONITSHA—TWO MORE DESERTERS—NEGRO MARKET  
—VARIOUS NATIVE TYPES—THE COPPER-COLOURED RACE—THE  
CANNIBALS—THE KING OF OBI-AKAZUA AND HIS COURT—AGRICUL-  
TURE AT ONITSHA—WOMAN IN THE NEGRO COUNTRIES—WE SET  
OUT IN CANOES—HIPPOPOTAMUS HUNT.

WE soon left Ossomare to proceed to Alenso, situated on the other side of the river, a little higher up. It is a point of some importance on account of the factories which the whites have established there and the negro village, about a mile from the Niger, with a population of from 1,200 to 1,500 souls. The traffic of the Ijesu country, which extends from Aboh to the river Edo, makes Alenso a really important place. The inhabitants have made an alliance with the people of Aboh in order to be able to make head against the Bouzo tribes, from whom they have suffered; this has occasioned great enmity between them and Ossomare, their opposite neighbours, Aboh's great enemy.

From Alenso salt increases in price; it costs eight shillings for 112 lbs. It is brought in little steamers either in casks or sacks. The negroes from the interior exchange ivory and palm oil for

it at the factories. They also provide themselves with little wands of copper, of which they import cases of 200. The value at Alenso varies from four to five pounds; there are also rods of copper about the length and size of curtain rods. The natives melt them and make little ornaments of them—rings, bracelets, and points for their lances; and, considering the poor tools they use, the taste and skill they display is surprising.

In directing our course from Alenso towards Oko, we left Lynx Island on our right. Perhaps it is so named because just as you pass it you must have your eyes wide open to avoid running on some sandbank. Last year a little English steamer, the 'King Massaba,' was detained there ten months.

The village of Oko is divided in two, Oko Superior and Oko Inferior, and each has its king. At first it was at Oko Superior that the English had their offices. But the King Boma was avaricious and treacherous, laid a heavy tribute on their traffic, and plundered them shamelessly. So last year they resolved to instal themselves at Oko Inferior, where they were received with open arms. Meanwhile Boma died; some say that he was poisoned by his subjects for having compelled European commerce to abandon his village. His son is more disposed to be civil, and has several times tried, but in vain, to bring the whites back. Oko Superior, however,

has the advantage of being on a large creek, which offers a very convenient means of traffic with the interior. When passing by I was interested in observing the native manner of fishing; posted in their canoes at the mouth of the creek, the negroes arm themselves with a javelin or harpoon, which they throw so skilfully that I have seen them catch in this way many of the fine fish which swarm in these waters.

At length, having passed Atane and the creek of Amambara, which rejoins the N'Subé Inam, we came in sight of Onitsha. The view at this point is very fine, wooded hills in the horizon, and everywhere negro huts embosomed in verdure.

Onitsha is situated on the left bank of the Niger in latitude  $6^{\circ} 8' 15''$  north and longitude  $4^{\circ} 20' 30''$  east of Paris. There I took leave of Mr. Hook and the Captain of the 'Victoria,' which returns at once to the coast, and landed with my men and baggage.

It was too late to think of beginning to explore the country that evening, so I busied myself with our encampment, and with thinking of the responsibilities about to devolve upon me, now that we should be living in an entirely uncivilised country.

Next morning, on mustering my men I found that two more had deserted: Bottled-beer and Eatwell had disappeared. I ran to the shore, but the steamer was no longer there. Had they fled to

the interior, hoping thence to reach the coast? I doubted it, for they must have known that they would be infallibly massacred by the hostile tribes of the lower Niger. Had they been concealed in the night by the connivance of some of the sailors, in the hold of the 'Victoria'? This was my supposition. If so, they ran away without taking anything of mine. My escort was now therefore reduced to eight men.

The shore at Onitsha offered a curious sight; the river was full of native canoes, and on the shore was a great crowd, motley and busy, coming, going, talking, and gesticulating, and sometimes appearing greatly excited. At first, I feared that I was myself the cause of the tumult, for they regarded me with looks which, if not exactly hostile, had certainly nothing of welcome in them. I approached them nevertheless, and soon saw what was going on. It was market day, and the canoes had brought men belonging to the neighbouring tribes to Onitsha to exchange their products for the European wares which the black traders sell either on their own account or on that of the factories they represent. Nothing could be more curious than this market. Standing or sitting, the women were exhibiting their wares: at one place calicoes, at another beads, here jugs or bottles of gin or rum, and everywhere large calabashes of salt. The men walked about among the groups, making ex-



changes with palm oil or ivory for the merchandise they wanted ; or soldiers made their purchases with cowries which are current in this region.

The traveller is everywhere struck with the diversity of races. It was here that I first saw copper-coloured negroes, who are found everywhere in Ebo ; they are fine men, well-grown, and carry their heads proudly ; they nearly all have blue eyes. They talk a great deal, and speak loud and fast. When they are negotiating any business one would imagine them to be quarrelling and that there is going to be a fight. They are a dangerous race, ferocious, and easily carried away to the most violent extremes.

There are other negroes among the groups ; they are lean, bony, and have a puny and miserable look ; they walk about in silence, with their heads down, avoiding, as if they were ashamed of themselves, to look you in the face. They are very much tattooed, and their skin very black. Their pointed shaped heads are shaven in some parts, with tufts of hair on the temples and at the top, which makes them look like clowns with a funereal air. They are cannibals. They abound in these regions, and their principal centres are N'Dako and N'Gwa, in the eastern part of Ebo. In time of peace they scarcely eat human flesh, for they are forbidden to devour each other ; but no sooner does a war break out than they can indulge



their appetites, for their horrible feasts are made at the cost of their prisoners. It is seldom that they are long at peace with their neighbours ; war is almost constantly raging among them, and little short of the extermination of their enemies puts an end to it ; thus it is not often that they are condemned to fast. Their features, their gait, their attitude, something indescribable about them, inspires one, at first sight, with disgust and horror.

With the exception of the cannibals, whose external appearance is puny, and whose only covering is excessive tattooing, the negroes of the other tribes are fond of covering themselves with necklaces and ornaments of every sort. Some have eight or ten rings of copper on their legs, and bracelets of the same metal on their arms ; others, particularly the women, have large ivory circlets just above the ankle, cut out of the largest part of the elephant's tusk. On their fingers I observed a large number of copper rings, even on their thumbs.

Most of the negroes go bare-headed. They are all armed, some with flint guns, of which the pan is protected by a skin, others with lances, javelins, and large knives ; the cannibals prefer to arm themselves with bows and arrows, inclosed in a rude quiver, or murderous javelins set in light bamboos.

The same day I visited the negro village of Onitsha, situated in the interior, about two miles

from the river ; a hilly road leads to it ; it is about 115 feet above the level of the sea.

The town extends over a space of more than half a mile, scattered over with houses, the walls of which are made of hardened sand, of a very red hue, which indicates the existence of numerous beds of iron. Long alleys and well-trodden paths separate the various groups of huts from each other. I counted more than fifty, and each group seems to form a little village. The total population of Onitsha may be estimated at 15,000 ; the people are active and industrious ; everywhere there are plantations of maize, yams, and bananas ; the palms are carefully pruned, and the cotton-trees or *bombax* are well cultivated. The natives recognise their value. They clean their cotton, spin it, and weave it on primitive and very simple looms, which they have no doubt learnt the use of from the caravans. But though fabricated at a great expense of time and patience, the cloths they make have, perhaps, greater solidity and durability than our cottons. Before spinning the thread they die it with indigo, which grows wild among them. As there is no occasion to economise it, they use only the heart of the shoot, and thus obtain a blue which can compare advantageously with our dyes.

Unfortunately for them they are at war with all their neighbours, but especially with the people of Aboh, who shut them out from the road to the

coast. Besides this, they are at enmity with the natives of Asaba, who live on the opposite shore, but higher up, as well as with the tribes on the eastern frontiers, the N'Kures, the Obanikes, the N'Subes, and the Ogidis. In short, Onitsha, surrounded as it is with enemies, is without means of communication with the exterior.

The present king, Obi-Akazua, received me graciously and with great pomp in his hut of state, a vast shed carefully closed on all sides. He was seated on a ledge of hardened sand covered with red velvet, which trailed on the ground. He was clad in a long green-flowered robe, and his head dress was a large hat of maize leaves, ornamented with a tuft of white feathers.

Around him were the dignitaries of his court. First, the high and mighty lords, the *N'didzi-m'boribas* ; the sign of their greatness is a bell, the *m'boriba*, fixed on the wrist like a sword-knot. These bells are very dear, and at present there are only eight persons privileged to wear them. After them come the N'di-n'zés or N'do-n'zés, who are recognised by a perforated ivory horn, the *ofan*, about a yard long, and with which they make shrill sounds. These are much more numerous ; it is reckoned that there are from 250 to 300 at Onitsha. They cost about 100,000 cowries,<sup>1</sup> a

<sup>1</sup> The value of cowries at Onitsha is about 1 fr. 25 c. (or one shilling) the thousand.



large number of yams or fowls, besides fifteen head of cattle. They may also be paid for in European products, stuffs, guns, powder, gin, &c. It is the king who fixes the amount of all charges at court ; he is therefore justly supposed to be very rich.

I also saw about him, the doctors, *Libias* as they are called, who are also the ministers of the fetish worship of the country, and the commander in chief, who is saluted with the title of Odogo, the symbol of whose great dignity is seven long white plumes stuck in his curious headdress, made of dried and withered leaves.

Surprised by all this get-up, my first words to the king were those of congratulation. I laid special stress on the impression which the care with which his subjects cultivate the ground had made on me.

‘God has given you a fruitful soil,’ I added, ‘and you see that we, the white men, come in quest of the oil of your palm-trees, the fat of your shea-butter,<sup>1</sup> and the ivory of your elephants ; we shall even buy the cotton of your bombax when, still better cultivated, it produces more. A king who can inspire his people with a love of cultivation is a great king, and may reckon upon the white man’s friendship.’

My words, translated by a young black from the Mission House into the beautiful language of

<sup>1</sup> Arbres à beurre (*Bassia-Parkii*).

Ebo, seemed to make an excellent impression on the king ; he replied that I was welcome, that he liked the Europeans, and that he was very desirous commercial relations between his people and the *békés*<sup>1</sup> should be developed more and more. He afterwards offered me palm wine and *kolas*, the red almonds of a very bitter taste which the natives, and especially the Mussulmans, are very fond of, but which do not suit our palates. I ate some of them notwithstanding, for offering them was a mark of great consideration, and usually only extended to the principal dignitaries around him. Moreover, he had made a great exception in my favour by giving orders to have a seat brought for me, for generally no one, whatever his rank, is allowed to be seated in his presence.

Then came the exchange of presents. The king seemed well satisfied with the calicoes, bead necklaces, mirrors, and a knife that I offered him. He had fowls, bananas, and a jar of palm wine brought for me, all of which were very welcome. He afterwards sent me a whole ox, on which I and my men had many an excellent meal.

On the same day I received visits from several chiefs who had been witnesses of my reception. Besides being curious to see my camp, they were

<sup>1</sup> The word *béké* signifies *spirit*. It is thus that the natives of these regions call the whites, whom they believe to be of a superior and divine essence.

evidently very desirous to have themselves some souvenir of the white man. Among these people the love of riches is very great ; it is a result of offices and dignities being sold. Everybody hoards up in order to be able to buy them some day, or to reach a higher grade ; for on passing from one rank to another they must every time pay a fresh tribute to the king. All are very jealous of their privileges. Thus, for example, however long may be the bench or seat on which a N'didzi-m'boriba or a N'di-n'ze may be sitting, no one may share it with him ; and if it is occupied when one of them wishes to sit on it, any one seated on it rises immediately and gives place to him. They are always accompanied by people who carry their arms and large fans made of skin, and they squat round them on the ground. Others are escorted by slaves provided either with a mat or a rustic wooden seat, and they sit at a little distance from them.

The king is never allowed to go out except on days of rejoicing or public fêtes, and then, in order to render the deities propitious, a human sacrifice is offered. The people reverence him as the mediator between the gods and themselves, and salute him with the title of *Igue*, which in Ebo means supreme being.

Certain representatives of the king carry a long copper wand, as a sign of their dignity, bifurcated at the end like a fork. It is curious to see them



standing, with their hands resting between the prongs of the fork, fixed in the ground, and their chins in the air, apparently plunged in profound thought, and looking absently at the objects around them, not a muscle of their face betraying the least emotion.

As I have said, I was surprised at the numerous cotton-trees growing in the neighbourhood of Onitsha; the cause of their abundance is curious. When a warrior of the tribe has slain an enemy he plants a young tree to perpetuate the memory of his exploit. If it were not for the barbarity of the conflicts which decimate these people, such a custom would be praiseworthy, for it keeps up a spirit of emulation among them, and of course favours the culture of valuable trees. For them these alleys of bombax-trees are, so to speak, the annals of the exploits which are the boast of the tribe.

The village of Onitsha has no water, and the inhabitants are obliged to get it from the river; they collect it in jars, wooden calabashes, or bottles, in which rum has been imported. They have the instinct of cleanliness in their manner of living, and men, women, and children are constantly to be seen bathing in the little bay made by the Niger below their town.

On the other hand, they have no kind of notion of modesty, and no idea of shocking us by their nudity. To judge from European manners, one

would be inclined to suppose that coquetry was instinctive among women ; but the negress proves the contrary, and seems to show that it is altogether a result of civilisation. Although she ignores modesty, she has not the least idea of the impression that a dash of coquetry on her part might make on a man ; the idea of captivating him by dress, by her looks, or her charms never enters her head, and she never tries to attract his attention. It is as if she were wanting in a sense. And, with all due deference to those who find fault with the manners of the European fair, I must say that from the utter absence of coquetry and grace the negress scarcely deserves the name of woman.

Marriage among the negroes is a matter of business, a bargain. Still at Onitsha the women are not treated as degraded beings, as among the other tribes, with whom they are regarded as mere beasts of burden. They are even generally trusted to manage commercial transactions. They traverse the country to collect palm oil and ivory, and sometimes in their exchanges display surprising intelligence. They do not, however, fill the office of commissioners until they have attained a certain age.

But this is the end of their prerogatives ; they cannot aspire to any public function or dignity. When a war breaks out they follow the combatants,

collect and tend the wounded, and exhibit a good deal of courage and much goodness of heart. If, then, coquetry is a product of civilisation, one must suppose that devotedness is a natural gift of woman, since even the most barbarous creatures are endowed with it.

Unlike the practice in Senegambia and among the people of Yoruba, the negresses of Ebo do not carry their infants on their backs or on the hips, but in their arms, which gives them a more tender and maternal aspect. But when the children arrive at an age when they can provide for themselves by the chase or fishing, they take flight, like a brood of sparrows, and there is an end of family ties. It is only among the high dignitaries, among the priests and the reigning families, that the traditions of home are kept up, because power and honours are hereditary.

The class of proprietors, the *Oganranians*, are active, industrious, and intelligent. They devote themselves especially to agriculture, and the plantations of yams, bananas, and maize bear witness to the energy with which they make the soil produce wealth, of which they cannot be defrauded. Sometimes they obtain two crops a year, but now and then the second is destroyed by the sudden rise of the waters.

As it was then the rainy season, and I hoped to be able to continue for some time to navigate



the creeks, I procured two canoes. A native of Sierra Leone, Mr. George, who on this and several other occasions was very obliging, assisted me. He is settled below Onitsha, near the Niger, and is the manager of the offices of the African Company of Liverpool in these parts. He is a gentlemanly man, very straightforward, firm, and always just. He has great influence over the natives, although in general they have an unconquerable distrust for blacks not belonging to their tribe.

I went in a canoe as high as Oko, whence I proceeded towards the interior, following the creeks running eastward, behind Lynx Island.

I had enrolled at Onitsha seventeen negroes, who, with my eight Kroomen, were my rowers. In the first canoe there was also a negro from Ebo, whom I had taken for a guide, and who, on occasion, might serve for interpreter, as he spoke a little English.

Rowed by twelve men, his canoe proceeded ahead. I occupied the second with twelve others, who were armed with guns. In order to enable me to arm them in my own way, the guide had orders to double back on us in case of attack. A tent, supported by four stakes and erected in the middle of my boat, sheltered me from the rain and sun. Standing at the stern on the ledge formed by the poop, Sea-breeze filled the office of steersman; he managed it with a long paddle



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HIPPOPOTAMUS HUNT.

My balls pierced his head.—(Page 138.)



which he moved to right and left, following the direction indicated by the guide's canoe. The guide turned the rudder in the same way. Seated on one thigh on the edge of the light skiff, the rowers cleaved the water with their short pointed paddles, and encouraged each other to work with wild cries.

When at Atane we quitted the Niger to get into the creeks of Obotshi country, a cloud passed over the faces of my Kroomen; they were thinking of the marshes of the delta! Still they did not venture to say a word. Having seen me then triumph over obstacles which seemed to them insurmountable, the white man, they thought, is proof against misfortune.

The embouchure of the creeks of Atane swarms with hippopotami, and a little before nightfall I called the guide's canoe, and prepared for the chase. I saw over sixty; a large head, like that of a horse, emerged every minute snuffing and snorting to the surface, and disappeared immediately. That evening I found it impossible to get near enough. This is because, in the rainy season, the creeks being full of water, the hippopotamus scarcely shows himself, and when you catch sight of his head or ears for a moment when he comes up to breathe, you have to hit him in the right spot, the temples, in a trice, or else the ball is flattened on the skin, which is as hard as a cuirass. The rainy

season occasions another inconvenience; if you have succeeded in hitting and killing the animal, drawn away by the current, it sinks in the depths and does not rise to the surface till the next day, and often at some distance off, on a sandbank, where the natives make a feast on him. Thus though I fired upon several, even if my balls had taken effect, I could not make sure of any.

Happily I knew that at nightfall the hippopotamus comes out to feed on the long grass on the banks, and at dawn plunges into his own element again. This is the time to fire at him. I slept in my canoe, and at daybreak was on the watch near the bank.

Before long, at the edge of a sandbank, I perceived a long procession of bulky forms moving towards the river. A little while after, at a short distance, I heard the grass rustle and a sound of falling sand; it was a hippopotamus, which on regaining the creek was dragging after him a mass of sand. I had never seen one at liberty, and felt a certain excitement at seeing him approach. There was not a moment to lose; I fired, and my balls pierced his head. For a moment I feared that he would roll over into the water and be carried away by the current, but instead of that he ran down sideways and fell upon the sand.

‘Hurrah!’ cried my blacks, and quick as lightning they darted forward, some in the water, some

in the canoe, armed with hatchets with which I had provided myself. When I joined them they were already preparing to cut up the monster, cutting out the hams, selecting the dainty bits, and from their eager looks and feverish movements I could see that there was ample material there for a feast for them.

. I had some portions salted, and the cask containing them placed in the guide's canoe ; other parts I reserved for our breakfast ; the tusks were drawn, and this done I gave the word for starting without delay.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ACCRES—KING OPUTA—A SATURNALIA—TWO ROYAL GUESTS—OPUTA'S  
FLOTILLA—OBOSHI COUNTRY—ESUAMA-EBO—TATTOOING OF THE  
CANNIBALS—RELIGION OF EBO—ARO, A HOLY CITY—NEGRO PHILO-  
SOPHY—A COMPULSORY VISIT.

NOT far from this spot we arrived at a village, or rather a little town, and I landed. It was Accre, situated at the point where two creeks met, in latitude  $6^{\circ} 41' 15''$  north and longitude  $4^{\circ} 25' 8''$  east of Paris. I gave Sea-breeze orders to get breakfast ready, while with an escort of twelve men, six Kroomen among them, I walked on.

I was an object of extreme surprise and curiosity to the natives ; they heard in no time of the arrival of a white man, and ran in crowds to see him, especially the women, girls, and children ; all were absolutely naked, and seemed in a very primitive state, but they manifested no hostility.

The town of Accre is built in the form of an amphitheatre on the creek ; the dwellings, made of dried sand, are large, and are for the most part decorated outside with wretched arabesques of leopards and alligators. I saw there a fetish temple, the entrance to which was guarded by three shape-

less idols carved in wood, coarsely painted, and leaning against pillars. There were numerous other deities inside, as well as a good number of human skulls and skeletons of animals.

All at once my attention was attracted by singing, shouts, and the noise of the tam-tam, and I asked what it meant. I was told that the King was fêting one of his allies, who had just come to pay him a visit. Immediately afterwards I observed a movement among the crowd assembled at the entrance of the royal hut; some natives came out and accosted me.

‘The King, our master,’ one of them said to me in the language of Ebo, which was interpreted by my Onitsha guide, ‘the King begs the White Man to enter his house and to witness the rejoicings which are going on there.’

I accepted the invitation. After having passed three blocks of buildings, separated from each other by very small courts with one tree planted in each, I arrived at the state apartment; it was a simple square with narrow galleries on three sides, so low that a man could hardly stand upright in them. In one of them was the King of Accre, who appeared to be about forty-five, and his friend and visitor King Oputa, ruler of the rich territory of Ogbekin, situated higher up the Niger. Both rose on my entrance and received me with marked respect and good-will.



I shall never forget the impression made upon me at once by King Oputa. He was a young man, scarcely thirty; his eyes, his brow, and his countenance altogether bore the impress of sadness, very surprising in a negro, for the negro features generally combine to form a jovial and trivial cast of countenance. How did Oputa come to have this dreamy and melancholy look, which apparently denoted keen suffering? Had his life been marked by some tragedy or some strange phenomenon, and instead of being effaced in blood, in joviality and orgies, has it left traces on his black face of deep and lasting grief? However that may be, I instinctively felt attracted to this young chief, whose savage exterior contrasted so singularly with his pensive and thoughtful countenance.

Thanks to his connection with the coast, Oputa had attained to understanding a few words of English, and I had made a little vocabulary of some expressions in the Ebo language; when we came to a standstill, my guide from Onitsha came to our aid.

I took a seat near the two kings, who immediately offered me kola and palm wine. The singing and dancing then began again. It was a downright saturnalia. The spectators rose in turn and cut wild capers; the kings' wives took part in it, and without regard to their rank vied with the rest in extravagant buffoonery. At the same time a



kind of troubadour of the *Griot* sort, standing behind us, celebrated the young king's feats of arms mixed up with hyperbolic praises of the white man, and in every measure of this rhythmic panegyric the names of Oputa and *Béké* (spirit) were to be heard.

The king of Ogbekin maintained his dreamy look ; he neither knit his brows, nor did his face betray any emotion, and when all around him, including his wives, gorged themselves with rum and gin, although he took his share, he was still imperturbable. Still, there was no affectation in it, he was not preoccupied with himself ; although the sovereign of a rich country, he was poorly clad, he had nothing on but a long ravelled-out robe, and as for ornaments, of which the other chiefs are so proud, he had only a large copper bracelet on his arm. It was not that he had any aversion to coarse pleasures or any contempt for ornaments ; he himself, by a few brief words, incited his wives to dance, and took the trouble to pour out drink for them ; if he was shown a knife or beads from Europe, he admired them. He was neither disgusted nor *blasé* ; his bearing was simply the result of his character, and his dreamy and melancholy look was either a natural peculiarity, or the effect of some bitter grief. But what sorrow, I ask once more, could leave traces so profound on the face of a savage ?

Meanwhile, dance succeeded dance, and warlike rhapsodies to plaintive chants ; the fifes sounded, the tam-tam was beaten furiously, and as the fête threatened to last a long time I prepared to leave my hosts and to rejoin my encampment, where breakfast, for which I was quite ready, was awaiting me.

When my Amphytrions learnt why I was leaving them, they opposed my going, and took me into a court, the galleries of which served as kitchens, where several old women seemed very busy. The prospect of a negro repast was not attractive to me ; I knew by experience what it consists of, even if that of a king, and my fillet of hippopotamus with rice and bananas was much more appetising. A happy thought came into my head ; I ordered one of my Kroomen to go as fast as he could to my Vatel, Sea-breeze, and tell him to bring the breakfast to me. By this means I killed two birds with one stone ; I generously regaled my host and satisfied my own hunger, while avoiding their scraps.

Touched by my generosity, the king of Accre testified his gratitude by a good loud laugh ; even the imperturbable Oputa seemed delighted.

Sea-breeze soon arrived with the famous fillet ; when they saw it, the two kings sat down in the middle of the court and prepared to eat on their knees. There were, however, under the gallery,

some empty boxes, which had doubtless contained bottles of gin ; I had them placed in the form of a table, after which we had our breakfast.

Travellers say that the flesh of the hippopotamus is delicious. Famished as I was, I cannot say that it came up to my expectations. Just because I was hungry I ate some of it with a certain relish, but it seemed to me insipid, and I fell back upon the rice and bananas. As for the portions contributed by the kings, my entertainers, to this picnic, I only just touched them, in order not to hurt their feelings ; a strong odour of palm oil was exhaled from some kind of broth or other in which a fowl had been minced up, and it almost sickened me. The maize porridge was so thick that I could scarcely swallow a mouthful. With the yams, to which I had before taken a liking, it was otherwise, and although they were all made into porridge I found them very good.

However, it was necessary to tear myself away from the feast. Sea-breeze gathered up the fragments, and I was about to take leave of the two kings. But they would not hear of my leaving in this way, and escorted me themselves, followed by their people. On leaving the royal hut I observed in a loop, formed by the creek, quite a little flotilla, dressed with flags ; these were Oputa's canoes. I suppose he had arranged the business which had brought him to his friend, the king of Accre, for



he gave the signal for starting, and his people rushed to the canoes. He got into the middle one, and invited me to join him.

‘You will find your boats,’ he said, ‘down there, near the village, which we shall pass.’ I hastily sent word, by a Krooman, to my people to prepare to start, and embarked with Oputa, after having warmly thanked the king of Accre for his excellent reception, and left him some presents, in return for which he sent my men some fowls, yams, and bananas, which were very welcome.

In the middle of the royal canoe a pavilion, made of mats, had been set up, in which Oputa’s wives were seated ; he stood at the prow and watched the departure of the eleven canoes which composed his flotilla. One of his dignitaries posted near him put a long zinc speaking-trumpet to his mouth, like those used by our jugglers ; Oputa had bought it of a Moorish trader on the Niger, from whom he may have got it who can say ? However, the negro blew into it with all his might, and drew lugubrious sounds from it which reverberated far and wide. It was the signal for the start, and all the canoes immediately obeyed. There was something novel as well as stately in the sight ; losing one after another from their moorings, the canoes took each its proper place in the procession, and I can say that Oputa, who scarcely spoke, was punctually obeyed at a sign or a single word.

I found my two boats at the other end of the town, and ordered them to join the king's escort, and for an hour and a half we proceeded together.

We parted at a place where the creek divided. Oputa returned to the Niger by the western creek, while I had to go towards the north, the N'Subé country. He took an affectionate leave of me, for he seemed to have understood the kind of sympathy with which his singular character inspired me. He also tried to deter me from my project of exploring the interior of N'Subé.

'You will meet with war,' he said, 'and will incur serious danger.'

Better still, he offered me men and canoes for an escort, but I declined, for my scanty resources forbade my acceptance of them. I promised, however, to visit him at Ogbekin on my return from the Niger. I sent him some presents and parted from him, feeling that I had gained his friendship, of which he afterwards gave proof.

The country into which I penetrated after having left the Oboshi tribes is called Esuama-Ebo. It forms the centre of the vast empire of Ebo, which extends from the country of the Akpotos and the Mitshis to the delta of the Niger, and from the western branch of the Old Calabar to Monte Video. This district of Esuama is much more healthy than the coast ; it is on higher ground and drier, and the air is not charged with the miasmas

However that may be, the people of Ebo believe in an all-powerful God, who rules their destinies, rewards and punishes them. They call him Tshuku or Tchi, supreme being. They also worship another, who, according to them, created the world and man. He is Orissa or Tshuku-Okeke, who is equal in power to Tshuku.

They also believe in the existence of evil spirits. The worst of them, the counterpart of Satan, is Kamallo or Igwik-Alla. Now Igwik signifies he who has had a high place before his fall, and Alla earth, from which it follows that this demon, *par excellence*, is no other than a fallen angel.

Finally, these people believe in the transmigration of souls, and are persuaded that after death they will reappear on the earth under new forms and new conditions, which will, of course, vary according as they have earned reward or punishment for their virtuous or evil lives.

Like the Jews and Mohammedans, who venerate respectively Jerusalem and Mecca, the people of Ebo have their holy city, to which they make frequent pilgrimages. It is Aro, situated in the central part of their country, about twenty-five leagues from the left bank of the Niger; the inhabitants, who are greatly respected, call themselves Omo-Tshuku, children of the supreme being. Its population is very numerous, and the dialects of all the tribes dwelling on the shores of the Niger



are to be heard there, particularly those of Elugu and Esuama.

It is not just any one who pleases who may enter Aro, where the fetish priests take great advantage of the public credulity. Before entering Tshuku-Abyama, the holy city, every pilgrim must sacrifice a victim outside the boundary, and in presence of the ministers of their worship. If the sacrifice augurs well, Aro is open to him. If, on the contrary, the priests draw a fatal presage from the entrails, the gates of the city are closed to him. The fetish priests carry on their trade cleverly ; that is to say, they make their oracles speak according to their interest, and carefully weigh the profit which such or such a pilgrim will be likely to bring, according to the influence which he enjoys among his tribe. One thing is certain, that they are very clever in discerning the true believer from the false, and know well how to dismiss the latter ; and he may think himself fortunate if he escapes the snares they have set for him on his return as a punishment for his audacious sacrilege.

But when the augury is good and the pilgrim is deemed worthy to tread the soil of the holy city, he is indeed to be envied. He is permitted to behold all the fetishes shut up in the sanctuaries of Tshuku ; and if he makes them generous offerings, and immolates fat victims, he is sure to obtain the accomplishment of all his wishes. The priests put

relics on his head, his chest, his eyes, and as a memento of his pilgrimage give him a charm, usually a shapeless drawing representing a crocodile or a leopard, or some cabalistic signs, accompanied by a sentence in Ebo, or one of the little metal ornaments which the population of Aboh, who are very industrious people, are skilful in making.

I have had the good fortune to see some of these fetishes, but in spite of all my efforts to get one, and the liberal offers I made, I have never been able to persuade one of the lucky owners of one to part with it. They look upon them as sacred things, and during the ten days after their return from Aro they themselves are *dju-dju* (sacred); they then trace a circle round the eyes by means of a yellow powder, the gift of the fetish priests, which possesses the virtue of preserving them from all evil, present and to come. During these ten days no one except a white man, if he happen to arrive, can have anything to do with them. When the time has elapsed, if they are going to war or to take part in any kind of ceremony, they often renew the yellow circle, and I have seen many of them very vain of being adorned with this absurd tattooing.

I have collected a few sentences from the charms of some of the pilgrims. For example :—

‘Tsi nauwa agin na n’huon benil (We drink every day the troubles of the day before).’

‘Miri na maohu na maonye kporo yaga (The rain wets the slave-dealer as well as the slave).’

‘Osui esui emene obeyan kaya ma (He who has and does not give is worth less than the poor man).’

When the fetish priest gives the pilgrim the charm selected for him, and with it the powder, he says :—

‘This is the essence of Tshuku ; if thy soul is in an evil state, if it is soiled with crimes, if thou art an unbeliever, thou wilt be struck to the ground as soon as thou appliest this powder to thy eyes.’

More than one person, therefore, after questioning his conscience, has prudently abstained from tattooing himself with it, and contented himself with religiously keeping the powder by him.

I directed my course towards the north-east, visiting the principal places in the way, hoping to reach the river Bonny, the Okoloba, as it is called in this region, which I had been assured flows through the N’Subé country. This brought me to a town which I afterwards learnt was N’Tejá. I noticed great excitement on the shore. The inhabitants seemed to be arming, and everything combined to make me think they were very hostile to us. With cries and gesticulations they called to us to stop ; some even seemed inclined to take aim at us with their bows and arrows. It

did not seem attractive to land under such circumstances, and I was endeavouring at all hazards to push on, when my two boats were surrounded by twenty canoes, manned by savages, who, by brandishing their lances and javelins, clearly manifested their intention of barring our passage. I immediately armed all my people ; however, after a short parley with the chief of one of the canoes, my Onitsha guide assured me that they meant no harm, but that their king wished to see me.

This cavalier fashion of forcing me to pay him a visit seriously alarmed me ; but I had not the embarrassment of choice. There was quite a band of them round us, and just then retreat was impossible.

I therefore decided to land, accompanied by my interpreter, six Kroomen, and eight negroes from Onitsha, and left Sea-breeze and the rest of my troop to guard the canoes.

## CHAPTER IX.

KING OGENE—‘YOU SHALL NOT GO TO THE EAST’—THE ORACLE—  
THE SOLDIERS’ OATH—NORTHWARDS—STUDY OF THE NEGROES—  
THE FAMILY—WAR—THE ‘ANAYA’—N’SUBÉ COUNTRY—ATTACK BY  
THE NATIVES—FIGHT IN CANOES—A WOUNDED MAN—EMOTION OF  
THE CREW.

KING OGENE was awaiting me under a thatched shed surrounded by four rows of soldiers. There was quite a forest of lances around the king himself, and the great dignitaries, all standing, were armed with bows and arrows, knives, javelins, and curious flint guns.

‘Decidedly,’ thought I, ‘this is rather a bellicose aspect of things; if these people are hostile to me I shall have something to do to get out of their clutches.’

However, I put a bold face on it and advanced towards the king, who made signs to me to take a seat which had just been brought. He had a benevolent look, but did not offer me his hand as most of the chiefs did when they received me. I had my suspicions, but there was no ground for them. I learned afterwards from my interpreter that Ogene is at once brave and timid, courageous

in war, but otherwise timid to excess, imagining that people have designs on his life, and that he will be poisoned. Such is his suspicion that he is afraid to touch any one's hand. He is a great doctor, well versed in the use of simples, and his knowledge, enabling him to trace the most subtle poisons, has only increased his terrors.

'Béké' (white spirit), said he, 'what do you come here for?'

'Great King,' I replied, 'I am come to see if the soil of your country is fertile, if its products are good, if the means of getting to you are easy, so that we may barter the oil of your palm-trees and the ivory of your elephants for the stuffs, the arms, the bead necklaces, and a hundred other beautiful things that we white men make yonder, and which we will bring you if you will accord us frank hospitality.'

'Listen, Béké,' he replied. 'I wish you no harm, for Tshuku will punish him who touches a white man; but I forbid you to penetrate further into my country! You see all my people in arms; it is because I have declared war on the Ogidis, my neighbours, who eat men. If you try to advance in the direction where the sun rises, I shall give orders to kill you, you and your men, and Tshuku will not be angry, for it would be for the good of my subjects. Retrace your steps towards the great Osimirin. Afterwards, when the Ogidis are



exterminated, you will come back here with the fine things you speak of, and I will furnish you in exchange with palm oil and ivory.'

As I ventured to make some very decided observations, to the effect that I would not return to the Niger by the way I had come, he promised to show me a way which branches off to the west and rejoins the river Inam and the Niger; adding that if I persisted in trying to go eastward towards the Ogidis he would never permit it.

There our conversation ended. He rose and invited me to the ceremony preparatory to the entrance of his troops on the campaign.

'You will bring me good fortune, Béké,' he said; 'come and see how Ogene invokes the favours of Tshuku on the heads of his warriors.'

Then leaving the shed which served him for a throne-room, he proceeded, escorted by all his dignitaries, towards the creek by which I had arrived, while one of the chiefs by his side frantically sounded a sort of trumpet—the konko—at the sound of which all the warriors of the tribe immediately assembled.

On reaching a clump of trees near the river we halted, and there under a large bombax-tree the ceremony was performed. An enormous calabash was placed upon a sort of trestle, near which stood the *libia* (doctor), who to the practice of his art adds the office of high priest of the fetish worship.

The king and the principal chiefs were ranged around him, the soldiers forming the next circle, and behind them were the women, old men, and children pell-mell, all curious to see what was going on.

The *libia* began by filling the calabash with pebbles, bits of bone, fragments of ivory, and vertebrae of serpents, and to this strange amalgam he added some sacred herbs which he brought with him. Meanwhile the konkos sounded furiously.

He then commanded silence and exclaimed: 'Tshuku is about to speak, Tshuku is about to issue his supreme decree! Let the good take courage, and the wicked tremble!'

At this point of his discourse he seized a hen, which he strangled over the calabash. Profound silence reigned among the crowd, while, with his eyes fixed upon his diabolic olla-podrida, the fetish priest seemed to be evoking spirits and holding mysterious communication with them.

He suddenly raised his head.

'The oracle has spoken!' he said. 'The accursed sons of Ogidi will be exterminated by your arms, soldiers of Ogene; your huts will be hung with their scalps; their flocks, their wives, will be yours! Soldiers of Ogene, you will conquer!'

In a sort of ecstasy he seized the calabash, presented it to the King, then to the chiefs, who all took from it a stone or a bit of bone; after-

wards he passed along the group of soldiers, each of whom provided himself with a fetish, which would render him invincible.

The distribution finished, he returned to the trestle, and uncovered a large stone blackened by time, which had before been concealed from view by a banana leaf. It was *Izi*, the sacred stone, which is used for taking the oath of courage and fidelity.

The King approached it first, raised it slightly, and said :—

‘ I swear by the *Izi* to exterminate the Ogidis !’

The principal chiefs then advanced in turn and repeated the oath, adding the promise of fidelity to their king.

Then the Commander-in-Chief, recognisable by seven feathers in his headdress, placed his hand on the *Izi*, and thus addressed the armed men :—

‘ Soldiers, by the sacred *Izi* which has received the oaths of your ancestors, swear to be brave as they were, to obey as they obeyed, to be faithful as they were faithful, to vanquish as they did execrable enemies, and like them to follow your king and never to turn back !’

At this moment an indescribable enthusiasm took possession of the assembly ; a thousand arms were raised, brandishing a forest of lances, sabres, and javelins ; and, one after another, all raised the stone, swearing by it to be brave and loyal.



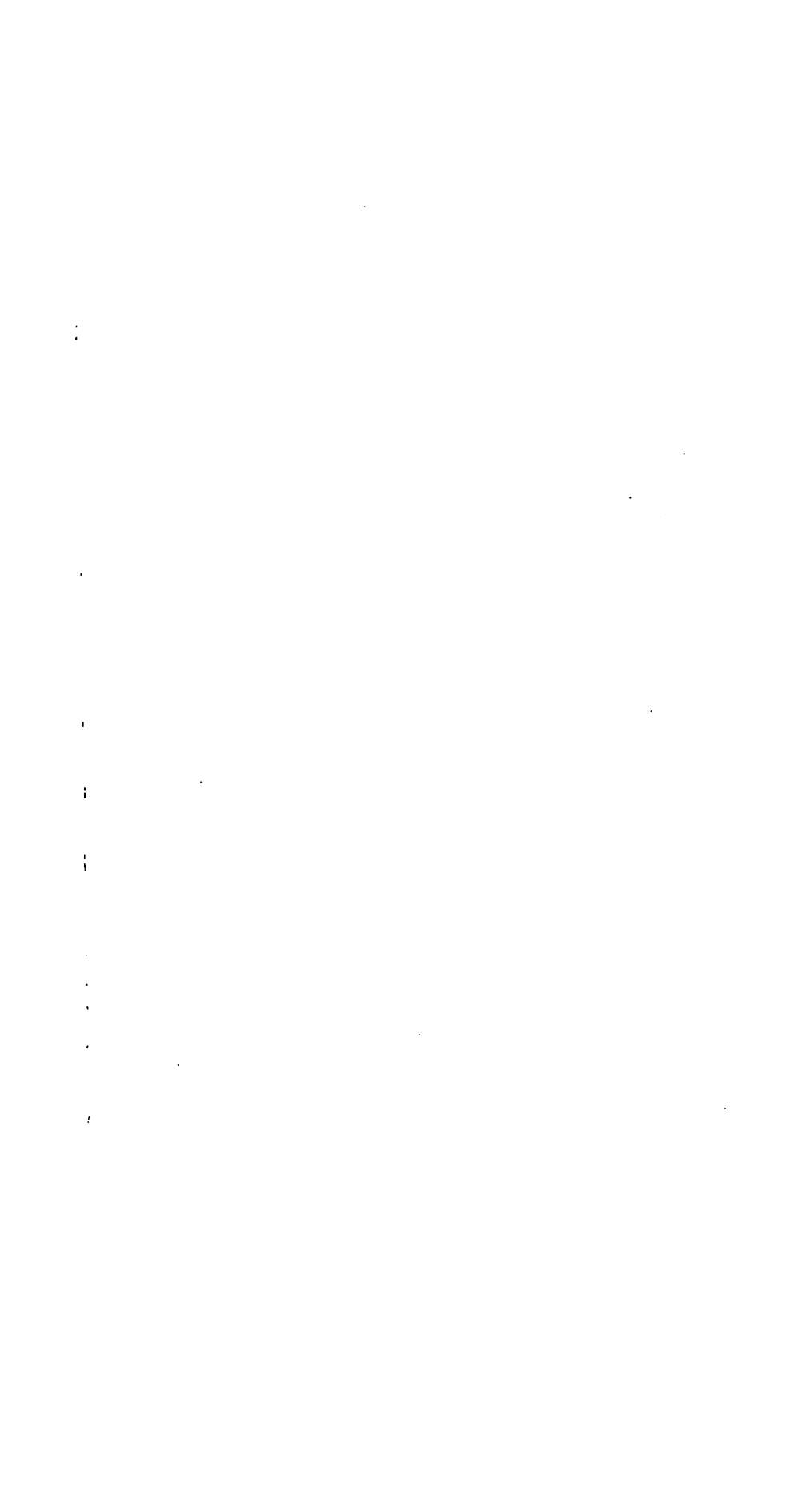
The crowd then gave itself up to transports of delirious joy; with dances, contortions, and the queerest capers were mingled chants, shouts, and the sound of the trumpet; men, women, and children prostrated themselves before the *Izi*, extolling the warriors, singing praises to glory and the love of bloodshed, and preluding the combat by warlike symbols.

The King approached me; fowls, bananas, large yams, and palm wine were brought, which he graciously offered for my acceptance, and in exchange for them I made him several presents, which he received with marks of lively gratitude. He invited me afterwards to leave without delay, making me promise not to go to the east. He apparently feared that my arrival among the *Ogidis* would influence heaven in their favour.

‘You can come back afterwards,’ he repeated, ‘but at present I cannot let you pass; retrace your steps towards the setting sun.’

I made some objections, but soon found that they were useless; and in order not to compromise anything in the present or the future, I did not insist any further. It was necessary to return as soon as possible to the Niger, to lay in the provisions which were indispensable for my voyage on the Benueh. I therefore gave the word for starting, and parted from *Ogene* on the best of terms with him and his people.







The creek which I followed on leaving N'Teja at first takes a northerly course towards Inam, and goes through some of the native markets. There are six large markets in the Onitsha country—Afo-Uku, Uko-Uku, Orië-Uku, N'Kuwo-Uku, Eke-Uku, and Uku-Uku; and four small ones, namely, Orië-Nta, Eke-Nta, N'Huwo-Nta, and Afo-Nta.<sup>1</sup> With Onitsha, this makes seven large markets frequented by the natives. From the agreement of this number with the days of the week, it appears as if, following our calendar, they were held on fixed days. Thus the market at Onitsha is always held on a Friday. This might naturally lead to the conclusion that the natives have a sort of calendar, and even that, like ourselves, they reckon by a week of seven days; but this would be quite a mistake. They have no idea of dividing the year into weeks and months; they calculate time by the sun, by moons, and the return of the seasons, and if their markets are held weekly it is purely the effect of accident. The names, however, by which they are designated serve to fix the time of a *rendezvous*, or of some event past or to come. They say to each other, 'I shall see you at Afo-Uku,' just as we might say, I shall see you on Wednesday. They say that one of their relations died at the time of the last Onitsha, that is to say, last Friday; but, as I said before, they do not

<sup>1</sup> In the Ebo language, *uku* signifies large, and *nta* small, less.

reckon time by weeks, and if the number of their markets were eight or nine they would reckon by them in the same way. All days are alike to them, and they do not celebrate their festivals on fixed days ; they depend upon the time of the return of the seasons, as they do also for planting and gathering in their harvests.

In the same way they are ignorant of their ages, and have absolutely nothing analogous to our registration system. I may add that the women never think of taking advantage of this omission ; time, it is true, takes care to imprint on their melancholy-looking persons the record of the number of summers they have seen, which no artifice, alas ! can falsify.

The negroes divide life into four great periods : infancy, during which man is fed and cared for by others ; youth, when he can take care of himself ; manhood, when he is capable of taking a wife and fighting ; and finally, old age. Among some tribes an old man is considered a useless being, a superfluous mouth to be fed, a burden, in fact, which they often get rid of by the will of the gods. In several places I was struck with the absence of old men. In others, on the contrary, particularly on the Upper Niger, old age is respected and revered ; they ask counsel of the aged, and follow it religiously.

The family can, as I have stated, scarcely be

said to exist among the negroes. Practically, as soon as the male children are able to provide for themselves, they leave their mother, often desert their tribe, and according to their instincts live at first by the chase, fishing, piracy, and then by trading or war. As for the girls, the parents keep them near them, and sell them on attaining the age of twelve, when they are marriageable. As soon as any one offers as much for one of them as they expect to get she is reputed to be married.

The number of wives which a man may have is unlimited, for it depends on his fortune. Every wife a man buys becomes his slave; she has to submit to all his whims, and work for him. Like her compeers in Europe, she attends to the house and business matters. On the arrival of a fresh recruit the others are far from looking askance upon her; they think themselves happy to have a reinforcement, and this is perfectly intelligible, for the more women there are in the power of one man the less work each has to do. It must be confessed that this is an original view of polygamy as it is understood among the blacks.

In general the negroes of Ebo are proud and fierce, and love war for its own sake. They usually take neither prisoners nor slaves; they carry on their warfare without pity and without mercy, with feverish excitement and an utter contempt for death, cutting off the heads of their enemies, making

trophies of them, and hanging the corpses on trees near the field of battle. For those among them who are cannibals it is a duty as well as a feast to eat their adversaries, and they have no doubt that in eating them they *ipso facto* inoculate themselves with the bravery or other qualities by which, when living, each one was distinguished.

The women follow the combatants to war, and provide them with food. They also search for and tend the wounded, and try to remove the dead, in order to prevent the enemy from eating their flesh or making trophies of their heads. Ferocious as they are, the negroes of Ebo are acquainted with a sort of truce of God, the *anaya*, by favour of which, even during the heat of the combat, they may visit with impunity any relations they have among the hostile tribe. This is a privilege of which they are proud, and they make a point of its being strictly respected. Woe to any one who, despite the *anaya*, should lift his hand against an enemy while visiting one of his relations.

Although it is not their custom to take male slaves in time of war, they always take a few prisoners for human sacrifices, a necessary accompaniment of some of their festivals. While awaiting their immolation these unfortunate creatures are detained in the neighbourhood of the temple under the charge of the *libias*, and as they are well aware of the fate in store for them, their pro-



longed agonies may well be imagined. If it happen that when the time of the public rejoicings is drawing near there are not prisoners enough, they immediately make war on some neighbouring tribe, for they must have them at any price. On this point the fetish priests admit of no compromise, and, however repugnant this atrocious law may personally be to the chief of the tribe, he has to submit to it, and furnish the executioner with the required number of victims.

The law of retaliation prevails throughout Ebo. Whoever kills a man is exposed to the vengeance of the friends of the victim until his crime is expiated by death. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, is the sole penal code. If the assassin succeeds in flying from justice, one of his relations, who must be his equal in rank, is taken, and he pays with his head for the crime of the defaulter.

To return to our course. For eighteen hours we navigated the creeks of N'Subé, taking a northerly course. I was struck with the solitude of these regions. Several times canoes coming in the opposite direction turned sharp round, as if the crews were frightened at us. Sometimes groups of negroes on the shore took to their heels on seeing us, uttering cries of alarm. I took it into my head to land near a mass of huts, and found them all deserted, everything indicating that they had

been hastily quitted. As the natives decamped in this way on our approach, I had good reason to suppose that they took us for enemies. The situation was critical, and it was necessary to be upon our guard. I therefore decided to land only in broad daylight, and when it was absolutely necessary to ask for vegetables.

It was about forty-eight hours since we had left N'Teja ; it was afternoon, and in the distance I perceived the bifurcation which King Ogene had spoken of ; the right branch took a course towards the east into the country of the Ogidis ; the left, which I was to follow, at least so I had been told, flowed towards the river Inam and the Niger.

Just as the guide's canoe, which was about twenty yards ahead of mine, reached the spot facing the bifurcation, it turned sharp round to meet mine. This was the signal of danger. In the twinkling of an eye my crew were on their feet and armed themselves. At that moment four large canoes came down the creek, armed by at least thirty negroes, uttering wild yells, and evidently chasing my foremost canoe.

It had, however, now come up to me, and without waiting for the guide's explanations I quickly handed in a dozen Remington guns and two bags of cartridges. At the same time I ordered my men to keep close to the shore, to prevent the boats from being surrounded and run



down, for such was the evident intention of the enemy, who now came impetuously towards us. Their pace was so rapid that they found it impossible to stop opposite our light boats, which fortunately they did not touch. They literally darted past us like a shot, and did not stop until they were a hundred yards or more further on, not without discharging a shower of arrows and javelins at us, which whistled about our ears.

‘Kroomen,’ I exclaimed, ‘remember that, if you fall into the hands of these savages alive, you will be massacred and eaten. They are cannibals. Do your duty bravely, and follow my example.’

The Onitsha guide addressed his men to the same effect. Then, standing in the prow of my canoe, I opened fire upon the four canoes, from which, ranged near together, they continued to let fly arrows at us. We stooped down in order to avoid them, and each one sheltered himself as well as he could behind a cask, a sack of vegetables, or empty cases.

When our assailants heard our firing and saw several of their people fall they were so taken aback that their ardour was quenched, and they took aim so badly that most of their arrows only flew into the air.

My men, and especially the Kroomen, who were more familiar with the Remington gun, behaved with a bravery which I did not expect.

Go-fast in particular, who kept near me, showed great presence of mind, and fired continuously.

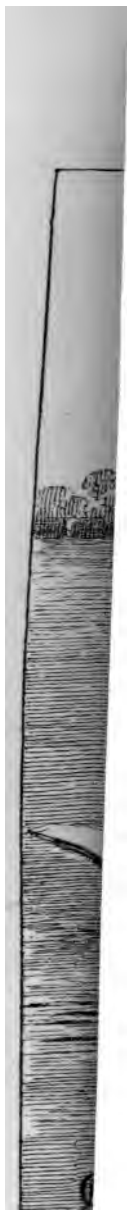
Understanding nothing of the reiterated shots which sounded about their ears, those of the enemy who were struck by the balls rolled about in their canoes, uttering cries of pain. The rest were evidently seized with mortal terror.

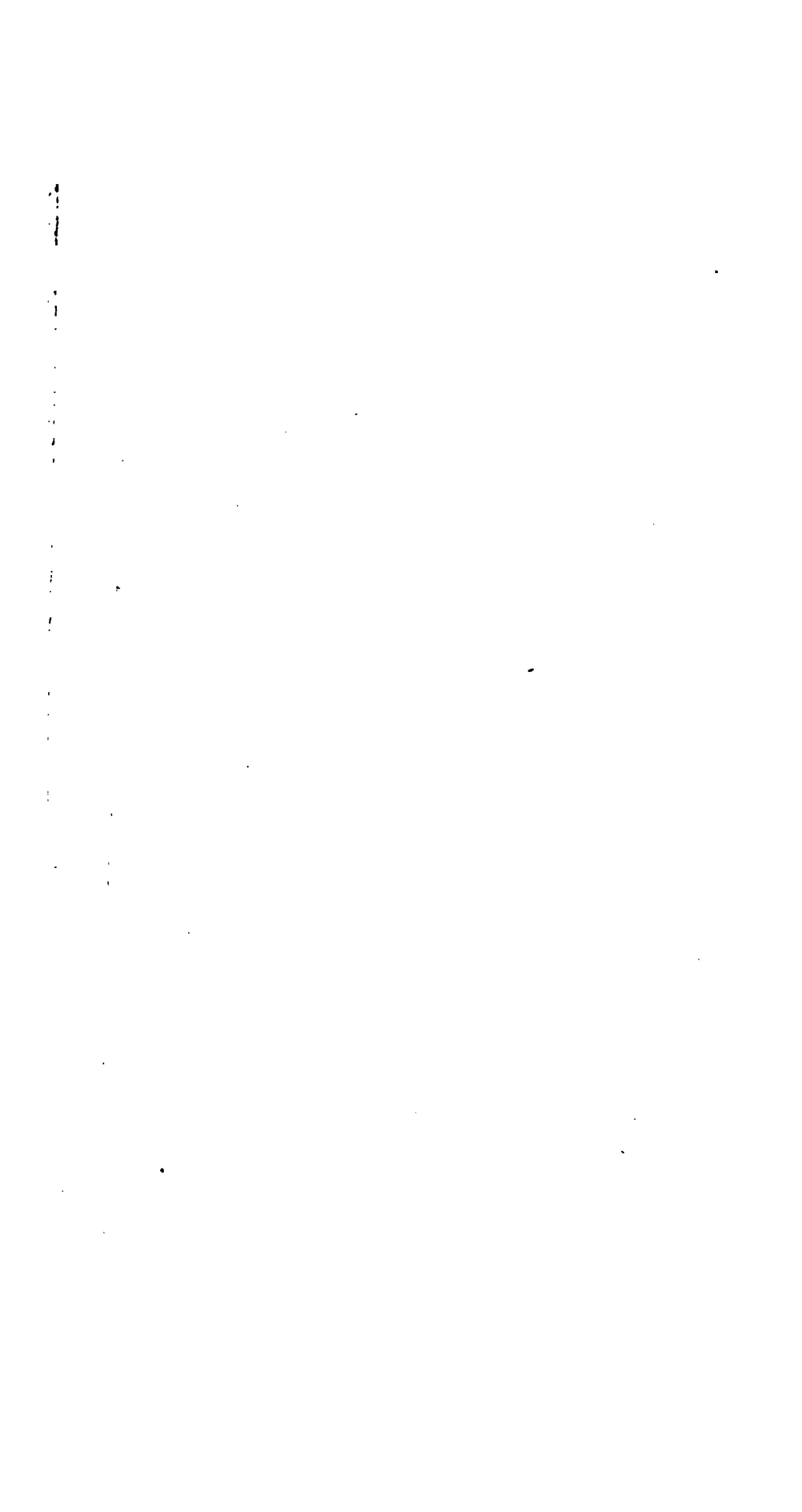
All at once Go-fast uttered a piercing shriek. An arrow had penetrated his right shoulder, and he fell down with a groan.

Up to this time I had abstained, from motives of humanity, from using explosive balls. Now, however, yielding to a fit of provocation, I loaded my gun with them. The effect was terrible. One of the enemy's canoes immediately turned over, and the aggressors ceased to harass us. But they are so agile and swim so fast that in a minute all those who had been thrown into the water gained the other canoes, and crowded into them pell-mell with the dead and wounded. Then, without waiting for more, they rowed off as fast as possible, and, urged on by fear, were soon beyond our reach.

Although victorious, I, of course, did not think of pursuing them, and having assured myself that they were really gone, I made it my duty to look after my faithful Go-fast, who was groaning in the canoe in severe pain.

First I extracted the arrow, which, although





very small, was a murderous weapon, for the iron point fastened to a slender bamboo was barbed like a harpoon. It was only therefore by causing excruciating pain that I succeeded in extracting it. I afterwards put a bandage tightly round the arm above and below the wound, which I moistened with ammonia. I had no doubt that the arrow was poisoned, and had heard that the natives neutralise the effects of the poison by means of a plant called the *raidore*, which my Onitsha guide assured me was to be found in the neighbourhood.

‘Go at once then,’ I exclaimed, ‘and get some.’

‘I dare not,’ he replied, all of a tremble.

I insisted : ‘Take four men, or six, take them all if you like, but go as fast as you can.’

‘No,’ said he, ‘I am afraid. Come with me yourself and then I shall be safe.’

‘Coward!’ I muttered between my teeth. But time was too precious to be wasted in useless persuasion, so I landed at once, when the guide followed me escorted by five men. Sea-breeze and the rest guarded the canoes.

It was not without some trouble that we discovered the herb we wanted. We looked for it in vain for nearly an hour, though the guide asserted that it generally abounds on the borders of the creeks. At last I gathered an ample harvest of it. It is a small plant with long slender leaves and a little white blossom. A decoction is made of

the flowers and leaves, with which the wound is bathed.

On returning to the canoe I found that Gofast's wound was gaining ground, and that his pulse was very feeble. It was a case for energetic treatment. I at once put a little perfectly dry powder on the wounded part and set fire to it, then washed the sound flesh and applied a poultice of the herb we had just gathered, and as my patient's prostration rather alarmed me I made him drink a few mouthfuls of excellent cognac, which I kept in reserve for such occasions. In short, whether my treatment was right or wrong I persuaded myself that he was soon afterwards considerably better. I made him lie down in the stern of the boat, and we continued our course to the west of north, that we might be beyond these dangerous regions before night.

While all this was going on my men seemed to be greatly moved. Far from alienating them from me, the dangers we had together been exposed to seemed only to increase, in their eyes, the prestige of the white man. Nevertheless, they could not avoid a feeling of vague terror, and in my conscience I could not persuade them out of it. I had associated these black children from the coast, who have but one sole good—existence, and one sole happiness—life itself, with me in an enterprise in which they might perish ; and what advantage would they gain from



it? Honour? Honour is a thing wholly unknown to them. Fortune, or at least a competence? Nothing of the kind. A few yards of cotton, a gun, a little powder was all that I could offer them. Incapable of judging of the interest attached to my travels, they justly asked themselves whether for them the reward was equal to the risk, and whether, after all, it would not end in their losing their lives in my service. For in a very short time they must all have been killed in the fray that had just taken place. They certainly did not display greatness of soul nor self-sacrifice in thus reasoning. But if they had reasoned otherwise, would it be necessary to civilise them?

While I was occupied with these cogitations, our canoes proceeded at a brisk pace, and when night fell we were a long way from the scene of the fight. We slept in peace, even our wounded man as well as the rest, and after that I had no fears about him.

## CHAPTER X.

THE ANNAM TRIBES—THE NEGRESS'S ANKLET—FISHING TACKLE—  
OGBEKIN—MEETING WITH OPUTA AGAIN—DEPARTURE OF THE  
ONITSHA MEN—MY PROJECTS—DEATH OF GO-FAST—THE FESTIVAL  
OF THE 'WAYE'—HUMAN SACRIFICES.

THE part of the country which we reached next day is inhabited by the Annam tribes, and it appeared to me extremely fertile; the palm-trees are cultivated with care, and the plantations of yams and bananas surpass those of the Lower Niger.

The natives of Annam are handsome, tall, and well-made, and among the ornaments with which they adorn themselves I observed one peculiar to them. Instead of having heavy bracelets of ivory or copper on their legs, like all the other negroes of the Niger, they wear on the ankle a sort of metallic cymbal, very thin, but at least from six to eight inches in diameter. They might be taken for shaving dishes, with a hole in the middle large enough to put the foot in; once put on it is impossible to get rid of this inconvenient ornament; even if the leg enlarges or swells a little, and whatever they may suffer from it, they are slaves to it to the grave.

It is to be observed, however, that the large ivory anklets which the wealthy negresses of the Niger wear are not mere ornaments, but serve as a sort of oath of fidelity. It is the equivalent of the wedding ring in Europe, but with this difference, that while the ring may easily be lost the negress's anklet is fixed for life on her leg or legs. It is not a very pleasant thing to wear. Far from it. The weight of a piece of ivory scooped out of the largest part of an elephant's tusk and reaching from the ankle to the calf of the leg may be easily imagined. The hole is just large enough to put the foot through, but not without pain and difficulty.

Burdensome as this adornment is, a woman who should give it away, sell it, or break it by accident, would be considered to have been faithless to her duties; she would be repudiated, driven away with contempt, and it is likely enough that a mere misadventure might be interpreted as a crime that would cost her her life. I have, more than once, tried to secure one of these famous rings in exchange for stuffs and beads, the sight of which was in the highest degree tempting to the women, but I never succeeded in getting one. They would readily have given me all their gew-gaws, but would not part with their rings for the world. Nothing alarms them so much as to ask it.

Happy are the negroes if fidelity is as secure in

the heart of their wives as the ivory ring, of which it is the symbol, round their ankles !

We were already manifestly approaching the Niger. The creeks, often so dark and narrow in the interior, became wider and lighter, and we often met fishing canoes. The negroes in them generally showed great surprise, mingled with fear, on seeing us, but they looked peaceable, and I even succeeded in buying fish and vegetables from them.

The fishing tackle in use in these regions deserves a short description. I had before observed below Onitsha, along the shores, rustic sentry boxes, supported on six poles about 12 feet above the ground, and had taken them to be stations for guardians of the river. They are stations, but for the fishermen. They perch themselves up in these watch-boxes, whence they can command the neighbourhood. A large oblong net, a sort of seine, with a basket in the middle, made of vegetable fibres, is suspended over the water. By the aid of a long rope of the same material, the fisherman lowers or raises his net. Near at hand, in a canoe moored to the shore, two negroes, silent and motionless, are on the look-out. As soon as the net is raised the canoe comes up and the catch is thrown into it ; the sentinel, who does not move from his eyrie, then again lets down the net into the river. This method appears to answer very well, for I have seen the natives thus catch a large quantity

of fish ; they swarm there, and they are as fine as they are abundant. This does not prevent them from also using harpoons and fish-hooks, which they manufacture themselves.

The fishermen I met with told me that we were not far from the great Osimirin (the Niger), and that they were come from it themselves after attending the markets of Oputa. This name, which recalled to my mind the king I had seen at Accre, struck me. I made further inquiries, and at length made sure that I was actually in Ogbekin, and that the large stream I was now on was a branch of the river Inam. Before long I saw in the horizon a large hollow—the Niger was in sight! while on the left side of the creek, at a short distance from the river, appeared Oputa's capital, Ogbekin.

My rowers cried, Hurrah! hurrah! The good fellows without a murmur had just accomplished a hard task. If they had now and then trembled, they had not betrayed it, and, as I said before, they had battled with it bravely. For them the Niger meant safety, welfare, and repose; and in the simplicity of their hearts they gaily saluted it with songs.

The town of Ogbekin, situated 6° 25' 30" north latitude, is the capital of the country of the same name over which Oputa reigns; it extends far into the interior beyond the creek. My canoes were scarcely moored when the natives crowded to the

shore. Without troubling myself about them I went to the king, preceded by a Krooman armed with the Belgian flag, which generally floated at the stern of my boat, and followed by Go-fast carried by four of the men in a hammock.

Having been informed of my arrival, Oputa came to meet me with a numerous retinue. I found him, as before, pensive and dreamy. He welcomed me in a very original fashion. After giving me his whole hand in the ordinary way, he retained one finger between his forefinger and thumb, and did not let it go until he had squeezed it to the tip. At the same time he repeatedly uttered the word *onowa*, which is, it appears, a mark of great friendship. This mode of squeezing the finger prevails also among the natives of the Lower Niger and the rivers of the Delta.

Oputa then took me to his huts, and having had palm wine, bananas, and kolas served, he invited me to tell him about my voyage. Following his example, the chiefs grouped around him listened attentively to the narrative of my stay in Ebo. When I came to our having been obliged to give battle in the creeks of N'Subé, the assembly hung upon my words. If I had incited him to it ever so little, the King would immediately have gone to war to avenge the injury. I took advantage of his favour to recommend my wounded man to him. He had him immediately taken to one of



his huts, and enjoined upon his *libia* to take care of him. He offered me a little set of rooms surrounded by a gallery, where I hung my hammock.

Before any thought of going to rest, I had to settle accounts with the Onitsha men whose engagement had just expired. I gave each of them a testimonial, certifying that he had served me bravely and faithfully. They were very sensible of this mark of satisfaction on my part, and to make sure of not losing it they attached it as a fetish to one of their charms. I afterwards paid them the salary agreed upon, which, though not very large compared with the dangers to which they had been exposed, made a great hole in my small resources. It was therefore with a full heart that when I went into my hut I reckoned up what remained.

Among the Onitsha men, the guide alone consented to accompany me any further, and he protested that he would not go as far as the Benueh. I proposed to ask Oputa for a canoe and to continue my route with my seven men, six of whom were to row, and Sea-breeze and the guide were to steer by turns. Go-fast's wound, although healing, did not permit of my taking him, and I decided to leave him under Oputa's charge until his recovery. In this way, unless compelled to make a forced march, I could reckon, happen what might, on getting on without difficulty.

When the king heard of my project he offered me as many canoes and rowers as I liked. I declined these brilliant proposals because the state of my resources compelled me to do so. But I did not betray the real motive of my refusal. To do so would have been to run the risk of falling several degrees in his estimation; and I did not wish at any price to compromise the prestige of which I stood in need. To account for my refusal, I said that just then I did not intend to push far with my explorations, and that one canoe manned by my seven men and the guide would be sufficient.

These points settled I went into my hut, and enjoyed such a night as I had not had for a long time. The next morning I was setting out to see our sick man, when Sea-breeze came running towards me exclaiming, 'Go-fast is dying!'

When I got to him I found that his case was indeed desperate. I was the more surprised as I had left him convalescent the evening before, and for a moment I suspected the negro doctor of being a vile criminal. But I soon discovered the solution of the enigma. Oputa had had a quantity of provisions distributed among my followers, and in spite of my restrictions, Go-fast, a glutton like the rest, had eaten a large part of the intestines of a sheep. It had caused serious indigestion which

proved fatal, for at noon, in spite of all that could be done for him, he expired.

His death was the greater affliction to me because I expected that it would produce a bad effect on the minds of his comrades. I knew that they would not desert me just then in Oputa's country, for he would have given them chase ; but how would it be when we were once *en route*, now that they had seen that I was unable to prevent one of them from dying?

In order to do honour to Go-fast's bravery and fidelity, I announced a solemn burial for the next day. In default of planks to make a coffin, I had his body sewn up in a piece of sailcloth, covered it with the Belgian flag, and allowed it to lay in state the rest of the day under the surveillance of two Kroomen.

The next day his comrades carried him in their arms to a place beyond the town, not far from the creek by which I had arrived. I followed the bearers. Being witness of my regret, Oputa had ordered some of his soldiers to join me, but, contrary to their custom on similar occasions, I imposed absolute silence upon them, and forbade their dancing round the body.

As soon as it was deposited in the grave, I said, addressing myself to the Kroomen :—

'Go-fast's conduct does honour to your tribe. He was brave, he was faithful, he was devoted. Do



you all follow in his footsteps and remember your oaths. Adieu, Go-fast, the white man will bear you in memory !'

Soon afterwards I threw a few handfuls of earth upon the body, which they then finished covering.

On returning to the village, I told my men that at the end of my journey I should give the wages due to Go-fast to Sea-breeze, and charge him to distribute it amongst his relations or friends.

Oputa continued to be very attentive to me; he accompanied me in several excursions which I made round Ogbekin, and explained some of the usages and customs peculiar to his people, as well as his mode of government, which is very similar in many respects to that of Onitsha.

Two days afterwards, it being the time of the sprouting of the new yams, the King invited me to the ceremony of which it is made the occasion. From early dawn the *konkos*, the sacred trumpets, solemnly proclaimed it. The whole tribe soon assembled opposite the royal huts, where I joined my host. The dignitaries arrived, and all respectfully saluted their sovereign, in whose presence they are forbidden to sit down. Each great personage was accompanied by a servitor carrying something in a large calabash. The King then rose, and asked me to follow him; the crowd did the same, and the procession proceeded towards a large bombax-tree in the open place in front of our

dwelling. There we found the *libia*, priest and doctor, surrounded by his acolytes. As we crossed the threshold of the royal hut, a negro from Oputa's suite, also carrying a calabash, took his place at his side.

On our arrival near the bombax, the chiefs, headed by the king, advanced towards the priest, and laid at his feet the contents of the calabashes, namely half a dozen freshly gathered yams, some kola almonds, and fresh fish. The *libia* took three yams which had been just cooked, and cut them up into bits. Each of the chiefs, beginning with the king, receives a piece which he swallows, saying, 'Thanks be to Tshuku, who permits me to eat the *waye*!' This is the name of the new yam. The whole affair ends with a festival, when the contents of the calabashes are consumed, and the *libia* returns home well supplied with the offerings of the faithful.

Among the Ogbekin tribes and all those on the shores of the Niger, another solemnity is celebrated which unfortunately is a proof of profound barbarism, and it will be found very difficult to extirpate; this is the annual festival of expiation, when two human sacrifices are offered. One takes place in secret, and is intended to wash away the king's errors; the other is enacted publicly, in order to expiate the crimes of his people.

The victims are generally young virgins taken

from hostile tribes, or bought from a neighbouring people, and they are therefore strangers. On the occasion of the public sacrifice the fetish priests cover the head of the poor child about to be immolated with flowers, leaves, and tinsel of all sorts, and conduct her, quite naked, beyond the limits of the town. The people are awaiting her there. As soon as she appears, men, women, and children threaten her with their fists, call down imprecations upon her, utter hideous yells, give themselves up to violent contortions, and shout at the top of their voices, *Arroyé! Arroyé!* (Cursed) imagining that they thus heap all their sins on the head of the unfortunate victim, and render her responsible for them. She is then put to death by the priests. Among the tribes of the territory watered by the Niger, they take her in a canoe to the middle of the river, and, having attached a weight to her neck, throw her in, while the crowd on the banks continues to cry *Arroyé! Arroyé!*

As I said before, it will be very difficult to put an end to this hideous practice. Besides its great antiquity—for it is found amongst the most civilised people of the ancient world—it is founded on an idea which is likely to exercise a powerful influence on the minds of barbarous nations: the idea that blood, and above all human blood, has the virtue of expiating the sins committed by man against man, or against the beings whom he worships.



## CHAPTER XI.

OPUTA'S WIVES—THE FESTIVAL OF THE 'MOA'—THE DEAD MAN DIS-  
INTERRED—WE LEAVE OGBEKIN—ASABA—A FETISH TEMPLE—KING  
ORI-IGWERI—THE TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY KINGS OF ASABA—  
IJBEBU AND IJESHA, IDDAH—EARLIEST TRACES OF MUSSULMANS—  
MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY—A FANTASTIC NIGHT.

ONE day, when by Oputa's invitation I was present at one of his councils, I was surprised to see two very pretty women squatting near him. As I manifested some surprise, he told me that they were his favourites. Afterwards he took me to four round huts, where there were about a hundred women occupied for the most part in plaiting mats or weaving cloth. They were pure negresses, bought or taken from neighbouring tribes, and were mostly very ugly; some of them seemed even to be no longer young. I saw before me the wastrel of the seraglio.

I was taken afterwards into a polygonal hut, spacious and well lighted, where ten other women were squatting on pretty mats. They all rose on our entrance, and several ran and danced towards Oputa; they were not in the least like the bulky negresses, so many specimens of whom I had just

seen. Their skin was black, but they had very fine features, large almond-shaped eyes fringed by long upturned eyelashes, aquiline noses, thin lips, and long wavy hair ; in fact, they were Moorish women, like those of Senegambia.

‘ These are my favourites,’ said Oputa. ‘ I buy them from the caravans which come from down there,’ he added, pointing towards the north and east, that is, towards the Soudan and the surrounding countries, whence the negro kings do really get the finest ornaments of their harems.

I was soon convinced that Oputa was kind and gentle to his wives. Although he invariably wore so gloomy an aspect, he caressed them, played with and laughed with them in my presence ; in a word, he seemed very fond of them.

Unlike the negresses, among whom the art of pleasing is a thing unknown, Oputa’s favourites were not without coquetry. Thus by means of an antimony pencil they dye the edge of the eyelid, which gives a kind of velvety appearance, a depth of voluptuousness to their fiery black eyes. Their long wavy hair is combed and tended with evident care, their hands are nicely kept, and, after the fashion of the Levantines, they dye the nails red with *lalai* leaves, the henna of the Orientals.

There was a girl of twelve years old among them, and Oputa amused himself by making her laugh.

‘She is a young slave,’ he told me, ‘whom I bought only a few days ago; she comes from Sokoto country.’

‘Poor child!’ I involuntarily exclaimed.

‘Would you like to have her?’ asked the king, mistaking the meaning of my exclamation. ‘Would you like to have her? I will give her to you.’

‘No, thank you. We Europeans have, and can have, but one wife, and before we make her our companion and the sharer of our joys and sorrows, we love her.’

‘What! only one wife!’ he exclaimed.

‘Only one, I assure you.’

‘And the same for all your lives?’

‘For all our lives.’

Not believing his own ears, Oputa had my words twice repeated by the Onitsha guide; he then translated them to his wives, who, I must confess, received them with shouts of laughter, as noisy as they were unanimous. They considered what I had said so amazing that they evidently did not believe a word of it. At the same time, their laughter was so frank that for a little while I lost my own gravity.

‘Then’ observed Oputa, ‘the white men must be very poor.’

‘On the contrary, they are very rich; there are some rich enough to buy the whole of your

country. But the white man's wife is not to be bought.'

'Ah!'

'No ; she takes the man she loves for her husband, and she is not his slave but his companion, his friend—his friend for all his life, and, unless he dies young, she never gives her heart to another.'

Did my audience take in the drift of these words ? I cannot say. At any rate the laughter had ceased, and these poor creatures, so handsome but so debased morally, listened to me in silence.

The next day Oputa had the *Moa* celebrated in his state hut ; it is a grand private family festival carried on in every dwelling, and he invited me to attend. First there was a repast served, at which his favourites were present, while his other wives feasted in their huts. At the end of the room there was a ledge, near which were placed three wooden idols, curiously painted ; a sort of *lares*, called *Tshi*, *Ikenga*, and *Ofo*.

The repast over, the king stepped upon the ledge, and calling each of his favourites to him in turn, addressed to them the following brief harangue:

'May happiness be upon thy head and fill my house ! May those who wish thee well be blessed of Tshuku ! May the wicked who desire to injure thee be confounded !'

Then he gave to each some little personal ornament as a present.



*To face page 186.*



KING OPUTA'S WIVES.

'Would you like to have her?' asked the king. 'I will give her to you.'—(Page 185.)

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To face page 186.



KING OPUTA'S WIVES.

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Finally he seized a jar of palm wine, poured some of it on the heads of the three idols, while he invoked upon himself, his family and his deceased relatives, the favours of Tshuku.

Like all negro rejoicings, the *Moa* ended with songs and dances. By degrees the wives became intoxicated with gin, and took the lead in bacchanalian revelry before the idols, which went on all night. It was the same in every hut, and the most discordant sounds proceeded from them. Orgies were going on everywhere within, while out of doors the young men made bonfires and fired some curious guns possessed by the tribe into the air.

But it was now time to proceed on my journey. Since my arrival at Ogbekin I had had time not only to see all that interested me, but also to make some preparations for setting out again. Among the rest I had exchanged with Oputa certain products which would have been useless to me on the upper river and the Benueh, for others which he had bought of white men, and which are highly esteemed there. This is the case especially with cotton goods and articles made of metal, copper particularly, while beads are not much sought after.

Before leaving Ogbekin I went again to the spot where my Krooman was buried. A melancholy spectacle met my view. The earth had been violently dug up and the dead man disinterred.

The bones, scattered about close by, indicated only too plainly what had happened. The hyænas and jackals, these lugubrious prowlers of the night, had picked them bare. I had them collected together and put into the grave, over which I planted the trunk of a young palm-tree, in the bark of which I had this inscription cut with a knife :

CI-EST GO-FAST,  
Croumane du pays de Grand-cés,  
Blessé dans un combat  
Aux Criques d'Annam,  
Mort à Ogbekin.

Il fut brave et fidèle.

Voyage d'exploration d'Adolphe Burdo.  
1878.

Here lies Go-fast. A Krooman of Grand-cess country. Wounded in a fight in the Creeks of Annam. Died at Ogbekin. He was brave and faithful. Adolphe Burdo's exploring expedition, 1878.

Oputa having promised to have the grave respected, I prepared for setting out. The merchandise which remained was stored away in the canoe, also the provisions with which the King had presented me, the arms and ammunition. My six Kroomen seized their oars, while Sea-breeze and the Onitsha guide sat in the stern and prepared to steer by turns.

Oputa was sorry to part with me. He had



called his dignitaries and wives together to take leave of me. Supposing that it would be agreeable to me, he offered to make me a present of one of the latter, just as he might of a sheep or an elephant's tusk, thus proving that he had not profited much by my lecture on marriage among the white men. I declined the offer, and without further delay gave the signal for starting. At this moment all the guns possessed by the tribe were fired with a terrible noise, for the natives have a habit of ramming their guns down to the mouth with grass, which is a frequent cause of accidents.

Before getting to the upper river I wished to visit Asaba, on the right side, among the Video hills, as well as Ijesha country, which extends to the west. With this end in view I steered towards Jervis Island. Not far from it I made a halt in a little loop surrounded by high hills. The rock of which they are composed is of a very red colour, and reveals the existence of iron in the neighbourhood. The natives whom I met with on the shore told me that Asaba was at some distance from the river. I therefore again embarked in the canoe, and went as far as a creek, where I stuck fast. However, night was then approaching, and it would not have been prudent to leave the canoe, so I decided not to land till daybreak. I did not close my eyes all night, being harassed incessantly by swarms of mosquitoes, centipedes,



and clouds of white ants, which get lodged in the planks of boxes and the wood of the canoes.

The next day I went to Asaba escorted by my guide and four men, leaving, as usual, Sea-breeze in charge of the canoe.

Asaba is situated in latitude  $6^{\circ} 11' 4''$  north, on rather high ground, which joins on to the Video mountains ; it is one of the most curious places I have seen. As in Onitsha, the roads leading to it are well kept, wide, and planted with trees. Instead of being merely built of thatch, the walls of the huts are made of dried sand, and, as the soil is very ferruginous, they are of a reddish colour. There is a temple in the middle of the town, open on one side, in which three niches are to be seen with idols in them. The centre one contains a block of stone, on which they have carved after a fashion a sitting female colossus, with new-born children at her sides. One of them sits astride on a fantastic animal between her legs. Other idols, equally grotesque, betray the meaning of these coarse symbols ; they are intended to express the idea of generation. The lower part of the walls is all covered with arabesques, representing strange beasts daubed with black and yellow.

Surprised by this spectacle, I was preparing to sketch the principal figures in my sketch-book, when I heard a terrific noise. The whole tribe, armed, seemed to be collecting together. At any

rate, I was surrounded by natives whose attitude was by no means reassuring. Happily, I did not lose my presence of mind. With apparent unconcern I put my sketch-book in my pocket as fast as I could. Then, taking off my hat, I respectfully saluted the idols, and threw at their feet by way of homage some bunches of threaded beads which I always had about me.

No doubt this set the natives' fears at rest, for they immediately changed their tactics. But though I no longer had to fear an attack, I was none the less an object of most critical examination. My clothes, which they touched with the tips of their fingers, withdrawing them as quickly as possible, as if afraid of burning them, my spectacles, my hat, my boots, all puzzled them. Thanks to their pacific dispositions, I hoped to get rid of them without delay ; but I was mistaken. They pointed with their hands to a hut situated on the other side of the open space, and gave me to understand that I must go there. It was the place where the king lived. Several chiefs accompanied me.

At the lower end of the audience chamber I noticed a sort of altar, on which was hung the stock-in-trade of a dealer in bric-à-brac, bits of ivory, copper charms, little copper bells, the famous *m'boribas* of Onitsha, arrows, javelins, vases of black pottery, and last, not least, scalps, sinister trophies which told of the deeds of Obi-Igweri, the

powerful king of Asaba. He soon appeared himself, and those about him remained standing ; he seated himself behind the altar, on a platform made of hardened sand. As they did not offer me a seat, I asked for one, which, on a sign from the king, was at once brought me.

Obi-Igweri looks rather old, at least fifty, but he may be much less, for the negroes age quickly. His hair and the little beard he had were turning grey. He belongs to quite a different race from the natives of Ebo, and traces are to be observed of a cross with the Moors. There was, in fact, some refinement in his features, and in his attitude and physiognomy there was a certain dignity which recalled the Foulahs.

The king was supported by a long ivory trumpet, and was dressed in a white robe ; he had numerous rings on his fingers, and on his head a red cap of the Persian shape, with a plume of feathers on the top.

He touched my hand, and asked where I came from. I gave him a short account of my travels, and told him of my projects, to which he did not appear to listen. Unlike the other native kings whom I visited, he did not communicate his impressions to the chiefs ranged in a circle round him, but behaved as if only he and I had been present.

What surprised him most was the whiteness of my skin.

‘How is it,’ he asked, ‘that the sun does not darken your face like ours?’

And feeling my hands he again asked, with a smile on his lips:

‘How is it that the sun does not burn you?’

My replies not satisfying him, he kept on exclaiming, ‘But how can your skin keep so white?’

Happily this not very interesting conversation was cut short by the necessary exchange of presents.

One of the characteristic features of Asaba is the large number of chiefs who all take the title of king, although all subject to one master, Obi-Igweri. They may be known by their cap of the Persian form, ornamented by a white feather, or several of them, and a large leather fan ornamented with bits of stuff or copper, which they hold in their hands; these are the signs of their dignity. I was assured that at Asaba alone, among a population of two thousand souls, there are over two hundred and forty kings! It is true this dignity is easily acquired; whether in time of war or peace, it is enough to kill a man among a neighbouring people and bring his head to Obi-Igweri. It follows, therefore, that more than one king owes his quality to some obscure assassination.

I did not stay long at Asaba, and spent the following days in exploring the country near the Video mountains, the southern part of which is

called Ijebu, and the northern Ijesha. It is there that Akpram, Asabutshi, Idoko, Ugboru, Uto, Ondo, Efon, Adoh are to be found, and the tribes of Oria, Ijesha, Ara, Egberi, and Ife, the great markets of the Niger, and the numerous villages of Ija or On'ya. Ijebu and Ijesha are very fertile and very healthy, thanks to the mountains which shelter them from the east winds. The country is intersected by creeks, and on the northern side it would be very easy for traders to reach it by the river Edo.

On returning to the river I passed first the villages of Abijaga on the left bank, which occupy a space of nearly two miles, then the Lander Islands; near these the Ojona Islands are also situated, which, to judge from the look of the fine plains, must be very fertile; then we passed the villages of Oniadegga, and, finally, the English Islands, of which there are three, extending from  $7^{\circ} 1' 10''$  to  $7^{\circ} 4' 50''$  north latitude, above them is the town of Iddah in latitude  $7^{\circ} 6'$  north.

Iddah numbers at least six thousand souls. It is built on the rock; the reddish hills that overhang it are about sixty feet in height. Being in the form of an amphitheatre, the town seen from the river has a very pretty effect. To the south of the town there is a bay, the only convenient place for mooring.

Although situated in Igara, a heathen negro country, Iddah is a nest of black Mussulmans. It



is there that you first hear *Haussa* spoken, that is, the language of the Filanis, of the people of Sokoto, and of the Upper Niger ; it very much resembles Arabic. Iddah is like the advance guard of Islamism, which will be sure to spread among the surrounding negro tribes.

The establishment of a Mohammedan population at Iddah is connected with a curious circumstance. After the annexation of Yoruba to the Mussulman empire of the Filanis by the King Umora, the deposed sovereign begged the Sultan of Rabbah to give him another country in exchange for the one of which he had been despoiled. Such a request coming from a deposed European sovereign would be met by a shrug of the shoulders, but they manage things differently in Africa. Far from being indignant, the Sultan set out, went down the Niger, stopped at Iddah, then inhabited by the Akpotos, bought their territory, and installed the deposed sovereign there, who took the title of *Attah*, which, in Haussa, signifies father or patriarch, and united to it that of *Onu*, the Yoruba for king or governor.

Though outwardly less savage than the tribes of Ebo, the Iddah men are much more formidable; they are avaricious, given to cheating, and treacherous; they are very dangerous neighbours, and it is difficult to guard against their depredations.

Opposite the town, on the right bank of the

river, the Aga traverses a rich country, that of the Bofos, while higher up, the river Barter flows in, coming from the mountainous country of Igbara-Hima.

On leaving this spot nothing can exceed the beauty and picturesqueness of the landscape ; on the left shore, the hills about Iddah turn abruptly to the east, and form a chain, called King William Range, of which the principal peak, The King, is 1,200 feet high ; next comes the Purdy, which is 800 ; near the river, which washes their feet, there are three other very pleasant-looking hills—St. Michael, 400 ; Franklin, 450 ; and the Crozier or Koga, 300 feet high. On the right shore, there is Mount Keri or Okiri, which, at a height of 1,400 feet, commands the neighbouring country ; while you see in the distance Mount Erskine (800 feet), and near the river the Soracte or Oro, and next Mount Patteh, at the foot of which is situated Lokoja, opposite the confluence of the Niger and Benueh.

Before reaching it I spent a night above Beaufort Island, between the embouchures of the rivers Meadowbank and Becher, both flowing towards the west, the former between the Kari and Oro hills in the country of the Wafas, the second at the back of Mount Oro in that of the Bunous. At nightfall the view in this spot is truly magnificent ; the taper granite peaks of Okiri and Purdy point

towards the sky, while the fantastic forms of the King William chain recede into the distance in the silver haze of the moonlight. Bare rocks of capricious form emerge from the verdure on the slopes of the hills, sometimes so strangely grouped that you might take them for the ruins of some proud castle, haunts of ghosts, or crags fit for eagles' nests, perched between the sky and the river.

All is rock in this region, even the bed of the river. Here and there the current breaks against some pointed ridge, and not far from where my canoe was moored there was an immense block, a rocky islet, where multitudes of turtledoves roost, to shelter themselves apparently from the clutches of the tiger-cats prowling about the shores at night.

It was a scene of silent and majestic grandeur ; openings in places in the walls of granite around us disclosed bits of dark-blue sky spangled with stars ; confined between the rocks the water flowed with a rushing sound, the only one which broke the calm of this imposing aspect of nature.

## CHAPTER XII.

AN ILL-OMENED EXCURSION—FOUR FRESH DESERTERS—A SAD AWAKING—MY CANOE EMPTY—DESPONDENCY—A CRITICAL MOMENT—UNEXPECTED SUCCOUR—THE BISHOP OF THE NIGER—LOKOYA—NEGRO MANUFACTURES—A POOR OLD WOMAN—MOUNT PATTEH—WELCOME HOSPITALITY.

THE next day, as we were in want of provisions, I resolved to moor opposite a small village which I saw a little way off, almost lost among interlacing trees and tall grass, which was only a dependence of the Sapia tribes. I went down to it with the guide, Starboard, Good-looking, and Black Jack, leaving Sea-breeze and three men in the canoe.

The village does not come down to the water's edge, as might be supposed from a distance ; it is nearly half an hour's walk off. It seems to be rich, is surrounded by well-cultivated grounds, and in front of many of the huts I observed natives preparing to clean the cotton of their bombax trees. Notwithstanding the alarm caused by our appearance, and although a few of them ran away, I stopped long enough to observe them. I thus assured myself that they not only spin, but weave their cotton like the natives of Ebo, by means of

rude hand-looms, of which, no doubt, the caravans have taught them the secret and the use. It is certainly desperately slow work ; it takes them two months to make a piece of their cloth. But, after all, there is no hurry ; they have time enough and to spare, and the raw material costs them nothing but the trouble of gathering. They have a large store of patience, and are not discouraged by a work of time. All things considered, I think their manufactures are wonderful.

My visit ended, having provided myself with some fowls and vegetables, I went back to the river. What was my astonishment at not finding either Seabreeze or the other three men in the canoe ! Greatly alarmed, I jumped into it ; everything was in its place ; not a gun, not a bale of goods was missing. What had happened ? Had the natives, taking advantage of my absence, carried off my men into slavery ? But in this case they would have robbed me. Still, under the influence of this idea, I decided to seek them, it might be to succour them, and therefore prepared to land. The guide, however, held me back, saying :

‘ Your men have deserted. Look here ; they have taken their things.’

This was true. They had taken with them their scanty possessions, tied up in an old rag.

‘ Besides,’ he added, ‘ after the fight in the Annam Creeks and the death of Go-fast, they took



fright. From things I have heard them say, I knew they would never follow you to the Benueh, where they were persuaded they would lose their lives.'

I was deeply moved by this revelation. My position was very critical. Before having even reached the Benueh, the supreme object of my expedition, the cowardice of my men threatened to compromise everything. I made a great effort, however, and, standing in my half-empty canoe, thus addressed the remainder of the crew :

'Starboard, Good-looking, and Black Jack, you can judge for yourselves of the cowardice of your comrades. Heaven will punish them, for they have broken their oaths of fidelity. If they hope to be able to regain their own country without my assistance, they are fools. They will infallibly be killed by the natives or carried off into slavery. You three, listen to what I say. I have been kind to you, and mean to be so still, but I have a horror of cowards, and I swear that I will put to death without pity the first of you who tries to desert me. Kroomen, remember your oaths ! Be faithful to me, and I promise to take you back to your beautiful Kroo country.'

'Hurrah !' cried the guide ; and the three others followed his example, but there was no heartiness in it, nothing to reassure me, and I still felt uneasy.

Night overtook us before reaching the confluence of the Niger and Benueh, although we were not far from it. With only four rowers we made but little way. I was determined to recruit the crew, cost what it might, as soon as ever I reached Lokoja.

When we lay to I made a final effort to induce my Onitsha guide to go with me to the Benueh. Up to this time he had absolutely refused. This evening he seemed less decided, and as he said neither Yes nor No, I thought he was disposed to be persuaded, and, mistaking his manner, augured favourably from it.

I fell asleep in spite of my anxiety, for I was excessively tired. In the middle of the night I awoke with a start, for I thought I heard the sound of water splashing. It was dark ; there was no moonlight, and day had not begun to dawn. Feeling a presentiment of some catastrophe, I got up and felt all about. Not a soul was there! My canoe was empty!

The poltroons! They had swum ashore. No doubt they were already some way off, and the shots that I mechanically fired towards the coast were answered by deathlike silence. Perhaps the deserters of the day before had fixed some spot for a rendezvous. But why should the guide run away when he would be sure to be liberated next day? Probably my urgency had annoyed him,

and he thought it prudent to take time by the forelock. For the rest, the fugitives had not robbed me any more than their comrades had done. In the greatest distress I waited for the day. I was almost beside myself, and a thousand confused ideas passed through my mind. What would become of me? I had certainly several times before been in great anxiety of mind. More than once, on considering the insufficiency of my resources, I had had misgivings as to the success of my enterprise. Yet, painful as my situation might have been, I had never lost heart. But now all of a sudden I was stopped short, and it seemed as if, left to myself, there was nothing for it but to yield to despair, and probably soon to die, without my friends ever having a chance of hearing how or where I had perished.

Hours pass fearfully slowly when filled with gloomy forebodings like these. How impatiently I longed for the day. But what difference would it make? The light of the sun would not alter the horror of my position. Was not darkness without another day better than day without hope?

However, at last some streaks of light began to appear in the east. By degrees the hills, the trees, the shore became visible, and pierced the veil of morning mist which hangs about the shores of rivers. A light breeze sprung up and fluttered in the folds of my flag, the sole friend and companion

left to me. This revived my courage, for it recalled my family and country.

Without much difficulty I unmoored the canoe and drew towards shore, so that I might land when I thought it desirable. I put my baggage in order, inspected my arms and ammunition, collected my notes and sketches, and then jumped ashore, hoping yet fearing to meet with a native. Before long I saw one going towards the river, probably a fisherman. I hailed him, but almost before he saw me he ran away. Two hours passed by. I went back to the canoe, lighted a fire, and was preparing to boil some yams when loud cries met my ears. At a short distance I saw quite a group of negroes, who seemed astounded at my appearance.

It was a critical moment for the issue of my travels, and even my life depended on what might happen. Taking in one hand some bead necklaces, and displaying in the other a piece of calico, I showed them to the negro nearest to me ; at the same time I pointed to the oars, and invited him by signs to row. He replied by shouts of idiotic laughter. Not discouraged by this, however, I renewed my pantomime, and another of them, under better inspiration, ventured to join me ; several others followed his example. By the aid of my fingers I tried to make them understand that I only wanted four, and at last succeeded. Thanks



to this unexpected reinforcement, in half an hour I was opposite Lokoja. A dense crowd, who appeared to have been expecting me, greeted my arrival with shouts, singing, and clapping of hands.

I drew to shore opposite a baobab tree, in a loop formed by the whirl of the current. The canoe was scarcely moored when a negro, dressed in a jacket and trousers in European fashion, darted towards me and accosted me in English. I felt inclined to fall upon his neck.

‘This morning’ he said, ‘the Bishop of the Niger was informed by a fisherman that there was a white man in these parts. He has sent me to you to ask if you are in need of help ; he places his house at your disposal, and offers you hospitality.’

Words fail me to describe what passed in my mind at that moment. Those only who have experienced the revulsion from terrible distress to unmixed joy can imagine the emotion with which I listened to these words. But an hour ago everything seemed to be irretrievably lost, and now, most unexpectedly, all was restored. It was the name of the Bishop of the Niger which had worked this miracle.

Having thanked my interlocutor, I asked him to help me in settling accounts with my rowers ; he kindly undertook it, and having dismissed them he replaced them by four others who were stationed on the shore.



To face page 204.



A CRITICAL MOMENT.

I invited him by signs to row.—(Page 203.)



‘These men,’ said he, ‘will take care of your effects ; they are known to me and you may place confidence in them. Now come with me, I will take you to the Bishop.’

The mission station is situated at the foot of Mount Patteh, below the negro village. On coming from the south you cross the course of a small stream, which the rains sometimes change into a torrent, while at others it is quite dry. A few trees have been thrown over it, by way of precaution, for a bridge. The mission occupies a large square, enclosed by a wall of hardened sand, and consists of a suite of rooms for the use of the Bishop, another for his servants, and another—a prolongation of these—which serves as a kitchen. At the lower part of the quadrangle, a modest building was in progress and about half finished, intended for a church. All this, it must be explained, is of the very simplest description ; one storey, no windows, gravel floor—this was all. Nevertheless, it seemed to me when I lifted the mat that did duty for a door and entered this hospitable abode, that I was crossing the threshold of a palace.

‘You are welcome, sir,’ said a native, with white hair, to me in English, clad in a long black frock coat and trousers of the same colour. This was Samuel Ajai Crowther, Bishop of the Niger.

We had so much to say, both of us had so many questions to ask, that for a few moments we

looked at each other in silence. I was the first to break it, and exclaimed :

‘I bless the happy destiny which has brought me to you. Had it not been for you I must have perished.’

‘I am happy,’ replied the Bishop, ‘to be able to be of service to a white man, for it is the white men who have made me what I am ; I owe everything to them. But what chance has brought you into these wild regions ?’

Having related my adventures, I told him my intention of exploring the Benueh, and that I was resolved to go as far and to remain as long a time as my resources would permit. When I had finished, he said :

‘Do not think of encountering the Benueh in a canoe ; it is a sheer impossibility ; the current is too impetuous, especially near here at its junction with the Niger. But there is an opportunity for going up it, at least, for a certain distance ; to-morrow, the little steamer “Henry Venn,” which belongs to the Church Missionary Society of London, is coming from Eggan, on the Niger, in order to take me to Imaha, on the Benueh, where I am going to try to establish a station. You will accompany me. You will thus pass the most difficult and dangerous places, those where the current of the Benueh, owing to its junction with the Niger, is as violent as a rapid, and your canoe would inevitably be capsized.’



This, as a matter of course, was at once agreed upon, and we went together to visit Lokoja.

As I said before, Lokoja is situated at the foot of Mount Patteh ; formerly, the inhabitants, the Bunous, dwelt on the plateau which commands the neighbourhood. Along the river there is a second group of huts which do not form part of the town. They are inhabited by the Igbiras, a nomadic people who have been driven away by Mussulman invasion from Igbira-Panda, on the Benueh ; they are a quarrelsome and pilfering set, and therefore hated by their peaceable neighbours.

The Bishop of the Niger only stays at Lokoja during the rainy season, because at that time the height of the water in the river allows of easy communication with the region by means of a little steamer. During the rest of the year he lives at Lagos, a town on the coast, to the south of Dahomey.

The English made an attempt at colonisation at Lokoja, which, however, they soon gave up. The ruins of the house that they built for the governor are still to be seen on the hill side. Baikie spent some time there in this capacity. One fine day the station was given up, and from that time the European traders abandoned their projects of cultivation and took their departure. At present there are only black traders at Lokoja, who collect palm oil and ivory for three English firms, whose



steamers visit Lokoja at the time when the water is high.

Lokoja is under the jurisdiction of the King of Bida, a Mohammedan negro, himself a vassal of the Sultan of Sokoto, supreme head of the Mussulmans of Central Africa. Unlike the Igbiras, their neighbours, who have remained heathen, they have for the most part embraced Islamism. They are of a timid character and but little inclined to war. Their territory has been ravaged many times by the irregulars of the Sultan of Sokoto. One day, when the approach of the enemy had been signalled to them, they ran in crowds to the Bishop's house and deposited there all their most precious possessions. This precaution saved them from ruin, and he is very popular with them. Nevertheless, very few of them are converted to Christianity. And, in fact, their tastes, manners and habits are on all points so opposed to Christian principles that it is a question whether there will ever be much success in inculcating them. Polygamy is, and perhaps always will be, a great obstacle; it is easy for the followers of the Prophet, on the contrary, to propagate the doctrines of the Koran among them, for it fosters their passions by allowing them to hope, even in the other world, for the pleasures that seem to them here below the most to be desired. By what method can such beings be made to love the spirit of abnegation, devotedness, self-renunciation,

charity, in a word, the principles of Christianity ? I fear it would be necessary to transform them altogether, and to transform them they must be transplanted to other climes ; and how can that be thought of ?

However that may be, a certain degree of industrial activity prevails at Lokoja. I saw a little forge in full action. A negro was beating the iron on a clumsy anvil, while by his side a child was blowing the fire with an enormous pair of bellows, made of the skins of beasts. In another place there were looms for weaving cloth ; in another, large vats, where they were preparing indigo for dyeing cotton. All this is done in a rude way, the tools are more or less clumsy, and those who handle them are often wanting in dexterity. I know these are but rudimentary manufactures, still, they are manufactures, and it would not be very difficult to teach the negroes to improve their tools and the articles they fabricate.

At Lokoja an old negress was introduced to me who, I was told, understood French. It was several months since I had heard a word of my own tongue ; my surprise, therefore, was mingled with keen pleasure on finding that she both understood and spoke it quite intelligibly, if not fluently. She told me her history. Sold as a slave when very young, she was taken to Europe by some Portuguese, and finally attached herself to some

masters who went to Paris, and lived near them there for a long time. Advanced in years and attacked by home sickness, she one day embarked for Lagos, whence she started on foot for Lokoja, and arrived there after an interminable journey, chequered by all sorts of adventures, perils and difficulties. The poor old woman was then very feeble. She expected to find her country, her family, her parents, but alas! she found none of them. Her parents were dead, her family dispersed, her village even had changed its place. Ever since she has lived in a sort of lethargy, not amounting to insanity, but affording evidence of a brain weakened by the many vicissitudes of an extraordinary life.

‘Often,’ she said, ‘that I may not forget the language of that beautiful country, France, I sing French songs.’

‘Would you like to return?’ I asked her.

‘I am too infirm,’ she said. ‘I must die here now.’

Moved with pity, I made her a present.

This poor black woman called herself Marie Elizabeth Jeanbeau, doubtless after her old masters, whose name she had adopted in default of any other.

The same day having removed my luggage to the Bishop’s quarters, and having got rid of my canoe, which was no longer of any use to me, I resolved to ascend Mount Patteh, in order to take







THE CONFLUENCE OF THE NIGER AND THE BENDU AS SEEN FROM MOUNT PATTEH.—(Page 211.)



a bird's-eye view of the confluence of the Niger and the Benueh. As the Bishop could not go with me, I set out with a young negro, a native of Sierra Leone, who spoke English and had taken the Arab name of Ben-Ali.

The ascent is difficult ; there is, of course, no path, and you have to climb a nearly perpendicular height of over seven hundred feet. It took me more than an hour, and I had more than once to climb with hands and feet. But there is a splendid view from the top. The Niger flows majestically from north to south ; there are fine mountains covered with forests along the shores, and the river is studded with picturesque islets. To the left the summit of Mount Outram stands out against the blue sky, while the Victoria chain extends as far as the eye can reach towards the upper river, and from the east the Benueh brings the tribute of its waters to the Niger by a vast cutting, in the centre of which is Duck Island.

I gazed long on this panorama. How many times I had dreamed of the Benueh, and how often I had despaired of reaching it. But here it was at last at my feet, and better still, I was to be permitted to navigate it and to study its shores.

Having made a sketch of the view before me, I made the tour of the plateau that crowns Mount Patteh ; the name signifies mountain in the native

language. The vegetation there is marvellous. I found vines, dates, those exquisite golden plums produced by the heglik (*Lalanites Ægyptica*), oranges, figs, large baobabs with enormous fruits, the monkey-bread, so called, citrons, butter trees (*bassia Parkii*), which bear a fine brown nut from which an excellent grease for machinery is produced; the dragon-tree (*dracaenas*), the *acacia Nilotica*; in short a splendid flora. One might say it was a corner of the terrestrial paradise. For the antelopes, who make off at full speed on seeing you, the buffaloes and monkeys it literally is one. Turtledoves and birds of all sorts also abound there. In the centre of the plateau there is a limpid stream which forms a pool and ripples over the grass. It was in this Eden that the village of Lokoja, of which I here and there observed the remains, formerly stood.

When I came down from Mount Patteh, the sun was getting low. The Bishop of the Niger was waiting for me. Everything in his abode breathes of austerity and simplicity; it is a hermitage of which he is the cenobite. But his hospitality is none the less charming and cordial, and I would not have exchanged his modest dinner for the most abundant feast.

After the meal we had a chat. It was now my turn to put questions to the venerable old man. I was very desirous to know by what strange vicis-

situdes this swarthy son of Africa had attained to the dignity of a Christian bishop. His life is like a romance, full of sufferings, conflicts, joys, and courageous efforts, and no one will reproach me for briefly tracing his career here.

## CHAPTER XIII.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE BISHOP OF THE NIGER—THE FINGER OF GOD—  
THE 'HENRY VENN'—ON THE BENUEH—IMAHA—THE GRAND  
MARABOUT—AGIMI, THE COLOSSAL WOMAN—THE CAMP OF KING  
KPANAKI—THE CONFERENCE—N'DAKO—FAREWELL TO THE BISHOP  
OF THE NIGER—HIS LETTER TO THE KING OF THE BELGIANS.

THE Bishop of the Niger was born in Igbira-Panda on the Benueh. As I have said, there is nothing in the slightest degree resembling our registration system, so that he does not know his precise age ; but his grey head suggests that he may be about fifty.

He remembers scarcely anything of his earliest years ; it may be supposed, however, that his father was one of the dignitaries of the tribe, for unlike the lower orders of the people, the traditions and sentiment of the family had been preserved in the hut in which he first saw the light.

One morning, when he might have been about nine years old, all the tribe ran in terror to arms. Numerous bands had rushed upon the village ; there was a terrible fight, and the assailants gained the victory.

It was one of the slave hunts that the child had just witnessed, carried on by the Filanis. The Filanis, who are negro Mussulmans, have by degrees invaded all the right shore of the Benueh, sacking the villages, cutting the throats of the old men and women, massacring all who resisted them, and dragging away in their train the men, women, girls, and children to sell them at the Eastern markets or on the coast.

The future Bishop of the Niger saw his father killed before his eyes. He clung to his mother's knees ; but the Filanis dragged him away, leaving the poor woman insensible on the threshold of the hut which was reduced to ashes.

For a whole year the child was taken from one market to another without finding a purchaser. What he suffered during these long peregrinations, and the atrocities he witnessed, are known to none but God and himself.

He was taken at length to the Western coast, and sold to some Portuguese slave-traders. The brig in which he embarked was one of those which they called a tomb ; it was a clipper with a double deck. The slaves were stowed away in the hold as a cargo of ebony ; in case of pursuit by a French or English cruiser, they were taken in chains to the false deck in the fore part of the vessel, and at a given signal were plunged by means of machinery into the water. After this precaution the slave-



ship could be boarded without fear ; it appeared like a respectable merchantman.

Having left Old Calabar without let or hindrance, near St. Helena the vessel with our young negro on board was chased by an English cruiser. Having no hope of escape, the trader thought to get out of the difficulty by throwing his cargo of human flesh into the sea.

In the dire confusion on board the slaver, occasioned by the approach of the cruiser, the child succeeded in hiding himself between two bags of salt.

The English boarded the vessel ; they had seen the trader's game, and the punishment was not long to follow ; the traders in human flesh were hung to the highest yards, and the clipper was to be sunk. But before sinking her they went over her.

Thus the child was saved. Touched with compassion, the English officers took him to Sierra Leone, where he was put to school. He made such rapid progress that it was thought he ought to be sent to London to finish his studies ; there he conceived a desire for the ministry, was ordained, and by his own request was sent to the coast of Africa as a missionary. He distinguished himself there by his courage, his aptitude and zeal, and rendered so many services to the cause of civilisation and the scientific enterprises with which he was



To face page 218.



THE BISHOP OF THE NIGER.

'My son! my son!'—(Page 217.)

associated,<sup>1</sup> that in 1864 he was recalled to England, and consecrated bishop by the Archbishop of Canterbury; it was then that the Upper Niger was assigned to him as his diocese, and he returned thither to evangelise his savage compatriots.

One day, when he was preaching at Imaha, a large village of Igbira-Panda, a poor old woman, bowed down with age and sorrows, drew near the group of natives formed round the black pastor. All at once the poor old creature is seized with trembling; the preacher's voice strikes her ear; she tries to see him, but the natives hide him from her. She listens again—suddenly, as if some infatuation had seized her, she makes way for herself through the crowd, and half dead throws her arms round the bishop, exclaiming, 'My son! my son!' It was indeed his mother, whom the traders did not care to take, and who, left for dead, after having seen her son torn away, had thus escaped both butchery and slavery. For eight-and-twenty years she had been wandering from village to village in quest of her son. She had just found him as a bishop.

While the good man was narrating this episode of his life, large tears coursed down his cheeks. 'If,' added he, 'I have done any good here, I was rewarded for it a hundred fold by this moment of ineffable bliss.' He took his old mother to Lagos,

<sup>1</sup> In 1854 with Dr. Baikie, and afterwards in 1857.

where he had taken up his abode, and surrounded her with all the care, the kindness, and tenderness which her life had hitherto been without, and closed her eyes himself when a few years ago she expired in his arms.

Such is this good man, Samuel Ajai Crowther, Bishop of the Niger, and he is to this day one of the most vigilant propagators of civilisation in Central Africa.

The next morning, in accordance with what had been announced, the little steamer 'Henry Venn' was at her moorings at Lokoja, and at half-past ten she weighed anchor, having on board beside the Bishop and myself several natives of Sierra Leone who live at Lokoja, and are my host's neighbours. She was commanded by Captain Robinson, under the direction of an excellent man, Mr. J. Ashcroft, of Manchester, delegate of the Missionary Society.

The 'Henry Venn' is a paddle-wheel steamer, which burns wood, and can thus supply herself with fuel *en route*; as she only draws three feet and a half of water, she can navigate the rivers even during a part of the dry season, and is thus of great service to the European establishments on the Niger.

On quitting Lokoja we doubled Duck Island and Point Onomay, which guards the entrance of the Benueh, which we were just entering. Behind



us was Mount Patteh, while on our right Purdy and the King William chain were for a long time visible.

The Benueh, or Tchadda of geographers, has quite a different name among the natives ; they call it the Neehu or Leehu, and the Mussulman negroes Baiki-N'Ruwa (black water), thus distinguishing it from the Niger, which they call Fari-N'Ruwa (white water).

At the confluence of the two rivers stands Ig-begbe, a place of some importance, which it owes, unfortunately, to the traffic in slaves. We had scarcely passed it when we saw the numerous villages of Gando. They were formerly studded along the opposite coast, the right side, and belonged to a flourishing tribe ; but one day the Filani Mussulmans appeared under pacific pretexts and asked to see the king. Old Oyeegu went to them with presents, but they had scarcely received them when they killed him, fell upon the defenceless villages, and took the inhabitants into slavery, after having destroyed their huts. Those who succeeded in making their escape crossed the river, settled on the other side, and founded the present villages of Gando.

Higher up various islands, Bodwin, Bayle, Smith, Waylie, and numerous sandbanks, render the navigation very dangerous. A native, therefore, who is familiar with the river keeps near the

man at the helm, and points out the course to be taken, a course which is often very narrow, although the Benueh in this part is nearly a mile wide and often more. As a still further precaution, a man suspended over the side of the steamer continually takes soundings, and reports in a loud voice the depth of the water. Besides this, they navigate the river in an original fashion ; instead of taking the middle of its course, they steer from one side to the other, so as to put the head of the steamer as much as possible into some hollow or affluent, near which it is supposed there will be sufficient depth of water. Everywhere the utmost vigilance is necessary, for you are surrounded right and left by sandbanks and islets almost level with the water.

We passed Atibo, situated in latitude  $7^{\circ} 5' 45''$  north, at the foot of the Igbara Mountains. As before, islands abound, witness those of Horny, Dickson, and Lynx. Above this the shore changes, being covered with brushwood, the roots of which are submerged in the river.

To the left, beyond a wooded hollow, we could distinguish the villages of Aganci. The natives came down in great haste to take down their nets, which were hung upon the trees, for they were afraid we were going to rob them. Then come the villages of Egba, scattered also in the wood. On seeing us the natives came down to the river, crawl-

ing like wild beasts, and concealing themselves in the thickets, trying to see without being seen. They doubtless feared a surprise, for they were well armed, and were evidently on their guard.

A little higher up we were stopped near the Harriet Islands ; the ' Henry Venn ' had run upon a sandbank. It was well she was a paddle-wheel steamer instead of a screw, and as the wheels turned easily the engines were reversed, and thus she could extricate herself without difficulty, which would not be the case with a screw. Here and there on the sandbanks numerous alligators were lazily extended. They are finer and of a yellower colour than those of the Niger. Sleeping in the sun with their jaws wide open, they exhibit a double row of formidable teeth.

At nightfall we saw fires burning on the right shore, which we took to be those of Imaha ; but on account of the narrowness of the navigable channel we did not venture to proceed so far during the night.

I slept in the open air, for below the heat was suffocating. The insects did not permit me a long sleep, and as soon as day began to dawn I paced the deck, looking out for Imaha, where we were to land. But the fires which we had seen the evening before had been lighted by negro fishermen, and we had great difficulty in discovering the town. The gig was let down. I took my place in it with

the Bishop and Mr. Ashcroft, and we soon saw it perched on a reddish-coloured rock half a league from the Benueh, on a narrow creek which comes in there, and, according to the natives, communicates with a river which they call the Otna.

The inhabitants were astounded on seeing us, and we were surprised at seeing among them but a very small number of men in the prime of life, but we were not long in finding the clue to this mystery. The Bishop having expressed a wish to see the king, in order to obtain permission to establish a school and mission at Imaha, was informed that Kpanaki—that was his name—had undertaken the siege of Amara, situated a little higher up the Benueh, and that he had taken with him all the warriors of the tribe.

Kpanaki is son of Ozineku, King of Imaha, in Igbira-Panda. Unlike the other negro heathen tribes who have opposed the Mussulmans, the people of Imaha have entered into alliance with them. They and their king have therefore been spared. The king, however, is a vassal of the Filanis, to whom he pays tribute, and under the supreme authority of the Sultan of Sokoto.

The hill on which Imaha is built is sixty feet high; the ascent cut in the rock is very steep and difficult. The soil in this part of the country is very dry and mixed with a sort of gravel, which gives to the habitations an air of neatness and so-

lidity not to be found in those on the Niger, which are made of sand, and the heavy rains soon damage them.

As we could not see the king, we asked to be taken to the grand marabout, the religious chief of the country, and quite as powerful, if not more so, than the king. He received us in a very large circular hut, where he was seated in Oriental fashion, on a hurdle set up on stakes, about eight inches from the ground. He was a true type of a Mussulman, taciturn and venerable looking; his hair and beard were white, he was clad in a long white robe, his turban also was white. Around him on the ground were seated the learned men of the country, all wearing turbans.

Our interpreter spoke Haussa to him, which is understood on the whole course of the Benueh and the Upper Niger; anyone acquainted with it may venture boldly from Iddah to the lower part of Adamawa.

The grand marabout offered to despatch a messenger to the king, to ask him for a permit for us to go to him in his camp. It was a day lost, nevertheless, we consented, for it would have been imprudent to venture, without a firman, into the theatre of war.

While waiting for the king's answer, I paid a visit to a woman of the name of Agimi, whom the natives look upon as an oracle. In order to find



her I had to pass long rows of huts and traverse a network of interminable alleys ; at length I reached a court in the centre of which she lived.

She soon came out, and I am sure that no imagination, however fertile, could conceive such an object as that which presented itself to my view.

Agimi must have been forty-five at least, and in negro land forty-five is old age ; her face was bloated, like over-ripe fruit ; her head enormous, and her flat nose almost lost in her puffy cheeks ; her obesity was such that no crowned *bœuf gras* would give an idea of this colossal woman. I did not see her standing, and I am sure that she must be incapable of walking or standing upright ; the weight of such a body must infallibly drag her down again.

To come to me she crawled out of her hut with the aid of her hands, and saluted me with her face to the ground. She was not, however, the only person who did this ; a good many of the natives of this region did the same. But instead of getting up she remained the whole time in that position, while, by the aid of my interpreter, I tried to say a few words to her, to which she only answered, '*Sanu, oku, gna-gna,*' as I was told the customary salutations in those parts. In short, there was nothing to justify the veneration with which she is regarded. She appeared to me to be simply a monstrosity.

The next day but one we left Imaha early in the morning. The king had sent two of his soldiers to request us to come to his camp. We took his messengers and their canoe on board.

On this part of the Benueh villages are but scarce ; but it swarms with little wooded islets, which in many places are very picturesque.

I was looking at the horizon, when in the distance some strange objects seemed to rise out of the verdure. By degrees they assumed a distinct form. It was a flotilla, moored to the left side, whose flags fluttered above the trees. We were opposite the royal camp, at a little distance from Amara, the besieged town.

Our vessel had been signalled, and we had scarcely cast anchor when two little canoes, each armed with a swivel gun, came towards us. They came alongside, and two of the chiefs who were in them came on board and asked to speak to the white men. It was the admiral and a captain of infantry.

They announced that King Kpanaki was willing to receive us. The Bishop, Mr. Ashcroft, and I immediately embarked, accompanied by our interpreter, Ben-Ali. The flags of the canoes that we passed bore Arab inscriptions, and the canoes themselves were full of arms and ammunition.

We landed near a steep hill, difficult of access, and only succeeded in climbing it by catching hold

of young trees. On the outskirts of the camp there were but few soldiers, but a number of women and children who, as we passed, clung timidly to one another ; these were the families of the soldiers.

At the camp itself the spectacle was surprising. Instead of undisciplined soldiers, I found troops ranged in good order, according to the nature of their arms, or the tribes to which they belonged. First, there were tall Mussulman negroes, wearing a white turban or red fez on their heads, and clad in an ample white cloth. They had long bent sabres, fastened by a leather strap to the left shoulder ; the sheaths, ornamented with charms, were also made of leather, green and red, and dressed like morocco, bearing witness to the skill of the makers ; then long rows of negroes quite naked, except a cloth round the loins ; their heads were bare, their hair short and curly, their bodies tattooed in many places ; they appeared very robust ; they came originally from the Niger ; I recognised among them specimens of the pale copper-coloured race that I saw at Ebo ; most of them were armed with long guns brought from Brass or Old Calabar by black agents from the interior ; then negroes of a wild and ferocious aspect, thin and bony, with tufts of hair on the scalp, pointed skulls and slender legs ; they were armed with lances, javelins, and bows and arrows ; their quivers were made of the skins of wild beasts, and they wore skins round

the loins ; they are cannibals, and dread above all things the invasion of the Mussulmans, who would be sure to reduce them to slavery. It was curious that they had allied themselves with King Kpanaki against the cannibal tribes of Mitshi, so that they were fighting against their brother cannibals. It will be remembered that there were no quadrupeds on the Lower Niger. After leaving Iddah, on the contrary, and especially at the confluence, a great many horses are to be seen, almost all small and of an Arab race. I saw many groups of them here forming the cavalry of this strange army.

In the middle of the camp we were joined by a band with tam-tams, large drums, fifes hollowed out of bamboos, and *rababas* with five strings, playing an air as noisy as it was monotonous, and surrounded by men who executed warrior dances as a prelude to bloodshed. They escorted us to the king, whose abode was composed of several huts made of thatch, supported by stakes ; some of them were round ; these were reserved for the women ; that into which we were taken, and which must have been the council chamber, was polygonal, and closed on two sides by folded mats. The king was waiting for us there.

He was seated in Oriental fashion on a sort of shield of woven rushes supported on stakes nearly two feet high. Near this barbarous throne, either standing or squatting on the ground, were the

chiefs of the various army corps, some of whom were heathen negroes or cannibals, the others, Musulman negroes or Fellahtas. They were armed with sabres, knives, lances, javelins, and bows and arrows.

Opposite the throne there was an empty space. Three large seats were brought by slaves ; one of them was made out of an old box, the others, carved out of pieces of timber, were shaped like an hour-glass. It was on these that we took our seats.

King Kpanaki appeared to be from thirty to thirty-five years of age ; the expression of his face is severe and his eye piercing. He belongs to a pure negro race, with thick lips, flat nose, and high cheek bones. He had wound a rich piece of scarlet stuff, about two feet wide, round his legs and loins, and had on his head a sort of leather helmet with a plume of white feathers at the top ; his fingers were covered with rings, and he had numerous copper rings on his arms and ankles. He was seated on the skin of a large leopard ; at his feet were lying two women, very handsome although black, decked out in ornaments of beads, copper, and gold ; the corners of their eyes were painted, their hair was well dressed and adorned with little gold arrows, and each held in her hand a fan and a fly whisk.

The king said a few words on receiving us,



and an interpreter, with his head entirely scalped, knelt before him. Ben-Ali advanced in his turn, and squatted down near me with my rifle between his legs. The king spoke in the Igbira language, which his interpreter translated into Haussa and Ben-Ali into English.

‘What are you come here for, white men?’ he said to us. ‘Do you not see that we are at war?’

‘Great king,’ replied the bishop, ‘many years ago I came to your capital, Imaha.’ You were not then reigning, but I was received by your father Ozineku, whose country was prosperous and at peace with the neighbouring countries. I was received as a friend, not because I am of the same colour as your people, but because your father knew that I came to bring him the benefits of a religion for which I am indebted to the white men.’

‘My father,’ interrupted Kpanaki, ‘was a great king, but he was also a brave soldier; his huts were hung with three hundred scalps taken from his enemies!’

‘The king, your father,’ continued the bishop, ‘showed a desire to see European civilisation, the Christian religion, and commerce introduced among his subjects. He made me promise to come some day to found a mission and school at Imaha. Many years have passed without its having been possible

<sup>1</sup> In 1854, with Dr. Baikie, on board the ‘Pleiad.’

for me to fulfil my promise. But I have not forgotten it, and here I am.'

'What my father did,' answered the king, 'I will do. What you promised him ought to be done. Speak, I am listening to what you say.'

'I went to your capital,' said the bishop, 'with these white men who come from a far country, but we found it deserted; you were gone, taking your people with you, for the purpose of carrying into these unhappy countries the torch of war.'

'Do you think that I am wrong?' exclaimed the king; 'do you not suppose I should like better to live at peace in my capital than among the beasts of these forests?'

'I know not,' replied the bishop, 'whether you are right or wrong, but this is what I have to say to you, O King; the true God, whom I wish to make known to you, forbids war. In this sacred book He commands us to live in peace with our neighbours, to love one another, and on these terms He promises to be in the midst of us. Thus what above all things I who am His minister require of you, what I exact before building a house of God in your capital, is that you will cause peace to reign in your States, in order that we may be always respected in them.'

'But Allah and Tshuku,' interrupted the king, 'do not forbid war!'

'Listen to me,' I then said. 'We possess, O

King, the riches which would make your fortune and that of your people. Judge of our power. We with our vessels clear the waters of the rivers faster than your horse at full speed can clear the ground, so that we can bring you rich and beautiful stuffs to clothe you, excellent weapons to hunt the animals that are good for food, and to defend yourselves from wild beasts; salt, which is indispensable to you, iron and copper. We can even construct dwellings for you which the water will never get through, and in which you will be sheltered from the sun and the tempest; all that you can desire we can give you.'

'Very well,' said the king, 'bring me all that, and I will give you in exchange, ivory, gold, and palm oil, which are so much sought after by the white men.'

'Yes,' I replied, 'we are quite disposed to buy the products of your country; but before coming here, O King, we want to be sure of not being molested or pillaged by your subjects or your neighbours. How can we be sure of it now that we see nothing but rapine and bloodshed? If you really desire to trade with us, begin by putting an end to these incessant wars.'

'I cannot.'

'You are master.'

'My father would have made war as I do.'

'He would have listened to us.'

‘Impossible! I must first exterminate my enemies.’

‘Well, then,’ said Mr. Ashcroft, ‘we shall go away and not come back again.’

‘And your father,’ continued the bishop, ‘from the depths of the grave, will learn that his son has made the fulfilment of my promise impossible.’

‘And we shall go,’ said I at length, ‘to offer our treasures to others. Adieu, King Kpanaki!’

‘Wait a bit, white man,’ said he, ‘wait awhile. I will call my council together, and propose to it to make peace.’

I noticed attentively the countenances of the chiefs grouped round the king, and for a moment it appeared to me that they were for putting an end to hostilities; I was auguring well for our negotiations, when a great clamour arose in the camp. There were shouts, snorting of horses, all the symptoms of an attack. Were we betrayed and surrounded? Had the natives in our absence attacked and pillaged the ‘Henry Venn’? This idea flashed into my mind. I looked round, and found that the door which opened behind us was barred by a triple row of soldiers.

I had my revolvers, and Ben-Ali had my rifle; these would have enabled us to pass the corps and to have opened the way for our companions. I was ready to spring upon those who obstructed the exit from the room, when the mat behind the

king was suddenly lifted, and another personage appeared on the scene.

It was a Mussulman negro warrior, tall and well-made, his face hard and cruel. When the mat was lifted by which he gained access, we could see outside a brilliant escort of armed horsemen; it was their arrival which had made such a stir in the camp.

When he saw him, Ben-Ali exclaimed:

‘N’Dako! Woe to us! Fly, master!’

‘Who is it?’ I exclaimed.

‘This warrior is N’Dako, the terror of these parts! N’Dako, the famous captain of the King of Bida, the great destroyer, the great recruiter for slaves,’ he replied; ‘his presence bodes no good for you. He hates white men. Fly, fly quickly!’

While on my guard in case of treason, I resumed my seat, curious to see what this terrible man was going to do.

N’Dako, however, had the king’s ear, and soon an animated conversation was going on, in which the admiral and general alone took part. The king looked radiant, and at length, addressing himself to us, exclaimed:

‘White men, do not talk to me any more of peace; it is impossible! Above all things, I wish to fight and conquer my enemies. As for you, if you have the audacity to penetrate any further, I will have you put to death without mercy.’



He rose immediately, and all those present did the same. N'Dako turned on us a look full of triumph and defiance.

'Take care, King Kpanaki,' I rejoined, 'lest you should one day repent of your conduct.'

'Do you wish for presents? Do you wish for slaves?' he inquired, doubtless disturbed at our dissatisfaction.

'We are Christians,' I replied, 'all men are our brothers; and of slavery,' I added, looking full at N'Dako, 'we have a horror, and we shall oppose it always and everywhere without mercy.'

Meanwhile, the admiral, who had approached us, was speaking to Ben-Ali, who said to me:

'Fly quickly. N'Dako brings to Kpanaki the alliance of the King of Bida, and brings him two hundred armed horsemen, who will assist him in making a great raid of which they will share the profits. He is afraid that you will oppose it, for he does not know how many men you have on board. But he is assuredly scheming your destruction. The admiral strongly advises you to fly as fast as you can.'

In fact, after hearing the king's last words the soldiers around us, and especially the Mussulmans, began to frown upon us. Outside there was a great clamour. Naked swords were flashing on every side. I resolutely made my way towards the exit, making a passage for my companions



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through the midst of the crowd, who seemed to be only waiting for a signal to fall upon us.

On reaching the shore we were joined by the admiral, who made us hastily get into our canoe, confirming all that Ben-Ali had said.

‘I am an enemy of N’Dako,’ he added, ‘but I am compelled to obey him; for the king is proud of an alliance which ensures him success in his enterprise. See,’—— he continued, pointing to the camp where there was immense excitement. The konkos sounded frantically, the tam-tams were beaten furiously, everybody ran to arms, and King Kpanaki, clad in a scarlet robe, mounted his horse with N’Dako at his side.

Women and children were running in terror about the shore, throwing their effects pell-mell into the canoes, and preparing to get into them themselves in order to take refuge on the Niger, while the army went to destroy Amara and capture the inhabitants, who would afterwards be sold to the slave dealers.

Bishop Crowther had to go back with the ‘Henry Venn’ to the confluence, in order to get to Bida, on the river Lafun. So I had to take leave of him. But before doing so he wished to give me a souvenir and witness of our meeting.

I had told him of the generous initiative taken by the King of the Belgians, and given him a long history of the Conference at Brussels (held at

the palace, September 1877), and the resolutions adopted at it. I had also told him of my compatriots, Maes and Crespel, who had both died on African soil. He said to me in his turn, before we separated:

‘When you return to your country, hand to your sovereign this letter written by my hand. It will tell him that you have largely contributed to make him known amongst us, that his name is engraven on our hearts, and that we love him as one of the most generous benefactors of our poor Africa.’

He then gave me a long letter, addressed to his Majesty Leopold II., King of the Belgians, President of *L'Œuvre Internationale de Civilisation dans l'Afrique centrale*. I then took my leave of him. I shall probably never see the good man again, but one thing is certain, that I shall not forget him.



## CHAPTER XIV.

STUDY OF THE BENUEH—HYPOTHESIS—STANLEY AND THE LOUALABA  
 —HISTORY OF THE MUSSULMAN INVASION OF THE EQUATORIAL  
 PLATEAU—SOKOTO, BIDA, AND RABBAH—IN THE COUNTRY OF THE  
 AKPOTOS—THE RIVER OKARI—A SNAKE—A FORTUNATE MEETING  
 —OGBARI AND KING ZUMBADE—RELIGION AND AGRICULTURE—  
 AN ALARM—A BLOODY FESTIVAL.

I WAS now once more left to my own resources. Happily I had a faithful guide on whom I could thoroughly rely ; in fact, Ben-Ali had engaged to follow me wherever I went. He was a most valuable interpreter. Besides Hausa, he understood and spoke the various dialects of the tribes on the shores of the Benueh, the Mitshi, and the Doma, which not only have no resemblance to the language of the Filanis, but differ essentially from each other. I was resolved to pursue my route until my resources were exhausted.

The mysterious river Benueh, whose sources are as yet undiscovered, offers a fine field for exploration, and perhaps when better known it will help to fill up the blanks in our maps in the heart of Africa. Everything tends to indicate that the Adamawa Mountains furnish an important contin-

gent ; but may not a series of lakes also exist there, as is the case with the sources of the Nile? May not the Shary and the Serbewell, which flow into Lake Tchadd or come out of it, have in some part a point of junction with Lake Tombouri, for example? In short, may not the Benueh offer the solution of more than one of the problems still waiting to be solved by the explorers of the great lakes of Eastern Africa?

In his wonderful journey across the mysterious continent Stanley has revealed to us the existence of a course of rivers uniting the N'Yangwy with the Atlantic Ocean ; but can it be affirmed that the course he followed is the only branch of the Loualaba? May it not have been only an affluent, increased by the enormous mass of water coming from the Western slopes of the Blue Mountains, and may not the principal branch of the Loualaba flow towards the West? From the point of junction of the Loukouga with the Lououa to Lake Kamolondo there is only about forty-five miles ; but notwithstanding this short distance it is stated that there is a difference of level in Lake Kamolondo of 1,246 feet, which the derivation of a branch of the Loualaba alone can explain. It may be added that just at the time when Stanley was crossing this interval he was obliged to keep in the middle of the river, and to shelter himself from the attacks of the natives behind the islands with

which it is studded, and that therefore it was impossible for him to study this part of the shores as he would have wished.

Be that as it may, the countries bordering on the junction of the Niger and Benueh are, as I have said, on the right side of the latter, Igbira-Panda, which extends as far as Oketa ; afterwards come on the same side Bassa, which ends at Egy ; Doma, of which the Adams Mountains form the frontier, and Botshi, which is prolonged as far as the chain of the Murchison Mountains. Opposite, on the left shore, are Akpoto, which comprises the region between the confluence and Agadumo ; Mitshi, extending from Agadumo to Anufo, and Karorofan, of which the river Akam is the extreme frontier. The Hamaruwa country begins there, occupying both shores, and extending as far as Adamawa, of which Yola is the capital.

All the right shore of the Benueh is under the power of the Filanis, that is to say, of the Mohammedans. Islamism has even invaded the left shore at Kororofan, whose capital is Wukari, and prevails as far as Hunueh, which joins Mitshi.

The idolatrous population, driven back into their last refuges, Mitshi, Akpoto, the Lower Niger, and the equatorial region, will be sure before long to be subjugated by the black disciples of the Prophet.

Kakanda, situated above Lokoja, is peopled by

emigrants, originally from the right shore of the Benueh. The Soracte Mountains serve as a refuge for these victims of Mussulman invasion. The Bassas, however, of that part differ entirely from the Bassa people settled on the Benueh. The latter do not tattoo themselves, and have their peculiar dialect. There is, besides, a people dwelling among the Soracte Mountains whose language resembles that of Nufi and Kakanda. There are also some heathen tribes there who have fled from the propagators of Islamism.

The Mussulman invasion of the central plateau took place long before that of El-Hadji, who, following the example of another conqueror, invaded the region of Fouta-Jallon, and was subjugating Senegambia, when his efforts were frustrated by the energy of Paul Holl at Medina and effectually seconded by Governor Faidherbe in 1857.

The seat of the Mussulman power is, as I have said, Sokoto, situated on the river Fadam, one of the affluents of the Upper Niger, south of the Soudan, in latitude  $13^{\circ} 30'$  north.

It was at that time but a poor straggling village, through which the Moorish caravans passed, which in every sense leave their tracks in Africa. One day Fodie, the precursor of El-Hadji, who was a mollah, as the Mussulman priests call themselves, had a vision. Mohammed enjoined upon him to call all believers to arms, and to gain over to

the true faith all the regions watered by the Niger and Benueh, which the Prophet assigned beforehand to his servants.

At Fodie's call the ferocious followers of Islam assembled in crowds from the north and east to range themselves under his banner. Led by him, they rushed like a tornado on the idolatrous population, and made a horrible slaughter of them from Gando to Adamawa. By means of fire and sword, killing all who resisted them, and dragging the rest into slavery, they were soon masters of the country between the Soudan and the Benueh, the right bank of which fell completely under their yoke. They then landed on the left bank, invaded Adamawa, Hamaruwa and Kororofan, driving before them or massacring all who made resistance, until they reached the Mitshi Mountains, which sooner or later they will surely pass.

What will be the end of this religious war, in which religion serves as a pretext for extermination? Will Islamism be a useful transition from idolatrous barbarism to a better order of things? Will any good come out of this invasion for these savage nations? Assuredly not; no one can venture to call this monstrous iniquity a good cause. No one who has seen the slave markets, the raids, the burning villages, the slaughter of women and children, can admit that these black sectaries of Mohammed will ever with fire and sword contribute

anything whatever to the progress of civilisation. Like Attila, who said that the grass could not grow where his horse had passed, the Mussulman invasion leaves nought behind it but ruin and iniquity. And where is the Catalonia to stem the tide?

The Mussulman negroes, however, are not hostile to Europeans. On the contrary, they estimate and appreciate their merits very highly. But it is quite in vain to propose to them to abolish the slave trade. Besides being a source of wealth to them, they regard slavery as a sacred institution, and on this point they are absolutely incorrigible. Besides, they have a rage for making proselytes, and are extremely rapacious, so that if at first they spare those who embrace the religion of the Prophet, it is that they may afterwards suck their blood to the last drop.

Ali-Hu-Sariki-N'Musulmi, the Sultan of Sokoto, is in the countries of which I speak the chief of Islamism, and undoubtedly the most powerful man in Central Africa. His capital, Sokoto, is built on the site of the poor village where Fodie had his vision; it is now a fine town, adorned with all the splendours of Oriental luxury. Ali-Hu's troops are numerous, well armed, and even well disciplined. He enjoys enormous revenues. He does not hate white men, but he clings to slavery as the apple of his eye. His countenance would be a great help to African explorers, and by the



aid of a firman from the Sultan of Constantinople, it would be easy to obtain it.

The kingdom of Nupe, or Nufi, along the shores of the Upper Niger, as well as the kingdom of Bida, watered by the river Lafun or Kundunia, are both dependents of Sokoto.

The King of Nufi is Umoru, nephew of the rebel of this name, who, for a long time, troubled the countries on the Upper Niger, and against whom the present sovereign fought in favour of the kings Zumo-Zaki and Massaba,<sup>1</sup> his predecessors. This rebel chief was formerly a slave merchant, and became commander-in-chief to Zumo-Zaki, king of Nufi and the Filanis, vassal of the Sultan of Sokoto.

Zumo-Zaki had a brother, Dasaba, whom General Umoru instigated to get possession of the power for himself and aided him in it. Afterwards the traitor set on foot a conspiracy against his own accomplice, Dasaba, incited the Filanis against him, succeeded in dethroning him, and assumed the authority himself.

Zumo-Zaki after these events interested the Sultan of Sokoto in his fate, and after his fall Dasaba also implored his assistance. The Sultan reconciled the two brothers, and advised them to unite their forces against Umoru, which they did. Although seconded by the arms of the Sultan him-

<sup>1</sup> Massaba is a contraction of Mahomet-Saba.

self, three times their efforts were frustrated ; nevertheless they ended by vanquishing the rebel, who took refuge at Gbako in Lafun.

The former king, Zumo-Zaki, then remounted the throne of the Filanis, and Dasaba took the title of king of Nufi, but left the cares of government to his brother. In 1873 the present King Umoru succeeded Massaba.

Rabba, the capital of Nufi, has 70,000 inhabitants, Filanis, Nufians, Haussas, Yorubans, and Egbous. It is a mile long. The caravans which stop there make it one of the most important points on the Niger. At the landing place you see extensive ruins of ancient Rabba.

The King of Bida, a Mussulman negro, vassal of the Sultan of Sokoto, is friendly to Europeans. For a number of years English steamers have visited his country, which is watered by the river Lafun or Kundunia ; they have been favourably received, and collect large quantities of ivory.

In the latter part of 1871, the steamer 'Formosa,' Captain Chaplan, was wrecked on a sand-bank between Lokoja and Eggan. In vain they tried to get her afloat again, and it soon became evident that nothing but the rise of the water would move her. This was in September, and there was a prospect of waiting eight or nine months. They left the vessel in charge of the natives of Sierra Leone employed on board, and the rest of the

crew went to Bida to ask for assistance from the king. There were the captain, an English engineer and carpenter, three members of the Crowther family, including the bishop, and Messrs. Renner, Bishop, Macaulay, and Campbell. The king gave them a cordial reception, presented each of them with a horse, and in order to enable them to regain the coast, furnished them with a guide. They went by way of Muregi, Ela, Lade, and Kopoto, traversed Ilorin, and at the end of three months arrived at Lagos. According to their account their journey was perfectly easy and agreeable, and they nowhere met with any misadventure.

Since that time a number of traders have travelled between Lagos and Bida by way of Ilorin, and take to the coast the ivories and little Arab horses from the countries watered by the Upper Niger. Bida and Eggan may now be considered to be open to European civilisation; houses of business and traders are established there; and eight or ten steamers pass that way every year. There are some English factories at Wonangi, eight miles from Bida.

But, as I have said, the influence of Islamism is generally very far from being equally beneficial; like the stain of a drop of spilt oil, it is gradually spreading over all the equatorial plateau, and its progress is too often marked by desolation and ruin. Everywhere on the Benueh I saw villages

destroyed, traces of conflagrations and bleached bones. Abattou, Oruko, Dagbo, and Egy in Bassa ; Otia, Agatu, Ojogo in Doma are merely ruins of villages sacked by the invaders, whose inhabitants have fled to the left shore, among the Akpoto and Mitshi mountains.

On the right bank of the Benueh, which has passed entirely under the Mussulman yoke, Hausa is spoken, a Gor language with declinable suffixes ; the natives, however, have preserved their peculiar dialects, Bassa and Doma, which differ from each other and from Mitshi, which is spoken on the left side.

Among the Akpotos and the Mitshis I observed the same characteristics as among the tribes of Egara and even of Ebo ; they are utterly barbarous, practice idol-worship, offer human sacrifices, and cannibalism flourishes among them.

When they want to get rid of anyone their priests frequently have recourse to poison ; they accuse him of some crime, generally sorcery, which is in their eyes a capital offence ; to justify himself the accused swallows a decoction of mint and oleander and succumbs. There is often a counter-proof, that is to say, the priests themselves take poison ; but they destroy the effects by some antidote, the secret of which I do not know. An emetic, however, would suffice to neutralise and destroy the effects of their drug.

The *Pourrah*, the existence of which I have mentioned at Sierra Leone, has many members as far as the Akpotos and the Mitshis ; but it is especially at Asaba that they abound. It is there that their ceremonies are most openly celebrated, to the great alarm of those who are not affiliated to this mysterious association. The religion of the heathen tribes of the Benueh is gross paganism mingled with customs and practices which offer a certain analogy to the rites of Judaism ; circumcision, for example.

Most of them believe in two gods, or it may be said two principles, one good, the other evil ; one of whom rewards and the other punishes.

Conceived of under the form of noxious creatures, serpents, alligators, or leopards, the evil deity exerts much greater influence than the good, although he is represented by useful trees, a river, or stars. It is to the evil deity that the greater number of temples are erected, and the greater number of victims immolated, in the hope of propitiating him. As for the good one, as he need not be feared, he is neglected. It is curious to see with what very little respect their idols, such as an earthen jar, a pot, or an amulet of some sort, the pretended representatives of the good god, are treated. They at first address prayers, then issue orders to them ; and if the matter about which their aid has been invoked does not succeed,

if their prayers have not been heard, the idols are subjected to all sorts of ill-treatment ; they spoil them, strike them, and often break them into a thousand pieces. But having thus outraged them, they hasten to collect the *débris* and preserve it ; and finally, to avert the anger of the evil deity and the punishment destined for the sacrilegious, they offer him a sacrifice.

To return to my narrative, however. When I had advanced as far as Zuwo I found that my scanty baggage was nearly exhausted, and with much regret I had to think of retracing my steps, and was doubtful whether, with what remained, it would be possible to regain the coast. This was not to be wondered at ; at every village I passed there was tribute to pay, the *karo*, as it is called by the Mussulman tribes, or a compulsory present to be offered to the chief. In any case, without some unexpected aid, it was impossible for me to venture further, especially as Mitshi was in flames, and I had continually traces of fighting, rapine, and carnage before my eyes. I decided, therefore, to return by the country of the Akpotos, who, as well as the tribes of Mitshi, are for the most part cannibals.

I came there to a river which the natives call Okari, which intersects the Benueh in several places, particularly near the Joko Islands on the left side of the river, in longitude 5° 20' east of Paris, and



which, to judge from my own observations and the information I obtained on the spot, can be no other than the Bonny.

Up to this day the river Bonny has been always represented on our maps as communicating directly with the Niger. I am inclined to think that it is not so, but that during the rainy season certain creeks which are dry in summer unite both with the river Enam. Among the reasons which induce me to think that the Bonny is not an outlet of the Niger I lay stress on the difference in quality of the palm oil brought down the two rivers. It is well known that, next to those of the Congo, the palm oils from the Niger are those most esteemed in the European markets, while those from Bonny have always been rated lower. By the rivers of Brass, on the contrary, the New Calabar, the San Barbara of Akassa, San Nicolas, and Benin, oils are brought quite equal to those of the Niger, with which these rivers undoubtedly communicate. Is not the difference in quality in a product, according to whether it comes by the river Bonny or Niger, an evidence that these two rivers do not communicate directly with each other?

According to the natives, the Bonny traverses the empire of Ebo and the country of the Ogidees, where it takes the name of Okoloba, pursues its course towards the sea, and at its embouchure is called the Bonny. If this is the case, this great

waterway, after arriving at a fertile country rich in products, will offer a valuable outlet for commerce in Ebo.

In proportion as I advanced further in Akpoto, my difficulties increased, for to my scanty resources and failing stock of ammunition was added the hostility of the natives, which became more and more evident. Every moment I was in fear of an ambush or treachery. Bands of them, flying before the Mussulman invasion, were scattered over the country; they mostly consisted of cannibals from Mitshi, and were still more to be feared than the attacks of which they themselves were the objects, and the destruction of their villages had exasperated them to the last degree. Several times I was obliged to conceal myself, and I avoided as much as possible the more populous villages. During the night I went out with Ben-Ali to forage for a few vegetables and bananas, for we lived on the produce of the chase.

My situation became worse from day to day, and I began to yield to discouragement. Sometimes it seemed to me that I was near my end. The privations, the excessive fatigue, the constantly recurring dangers, being so perpetually on the *qui vive* that it deprived me of all rest, weakened both mind and body. Nevertheless I would not on any account have betrayed my anxieties to my faithful Ali. Come what might, and terribly alarmed as I

was both for him and myself, I affected to be cheerful and hopeful as to our fate. One night I had, according to custom, hung my hammock to some young palm-trees growing near a creek communicating with the river Okari, which we had already crossed, and overcome with fatigue, I had fallen asleep while Ali kept watch. We mounted guard by turns, and I rarely slept more than two hours at a time. It had been so ever since I left the Senegambia ; when sleep was not rendered uneasy and feverish by preoccupation of mind or some imminent danger, the mosquitoes took care to disturb it. Of course I entirely gave up the habit of undressing at night ; on the contrary, in order to defend myself from the stings of insects, I fastened my clothes up, and put on more by night than by day. There is nothing for it but to make the best of it ; rest, however, under such conditions is but factitious ; the body, by dint of being worn out, reposes, but the ear is not closed, and the mind is on the alert. Sleep comes, but it is like the sleep of the somnambulist.

In a less fatal climate, in a country favoured by heaven like Palestine or Syria, a life such as I was leading might have some charms, but in Central Africa I must confess that there were none whatever. Far from being poetical, the torrents of rain, the miasma from the marshes, the insects, the scanty fare, the sight of, contact with, and fear of

the natives, all made it unpleasant, and often it was very hard and bitter.

On the night in question I was in an exceptionally sound sleep, when I was awakened by a sharp pain in my hip. I had just been stung by a snake, which I felt crawling under my hand. I instinctively threw over him the burnous which covered me, and tried to kill him with the end of my revolver. Without knowing it, I struck him on the head. He was spotted with green and black, his head was flat, and his tail tapered off to a point. He was as large round as one's thumb, and five feet in length. I brought him to Europe.

As the sting gave me a horrible burning pain, I got Ali to boil some tufts of *raidore* and apply them to the wound, having first laid it bare by putting a pinch of powder on it and setting fire to it.

Of course I had not a moment's rest after this ; I was afraid of fever, which I had happily escaped heretofore, and I could not help cursing the fates which had been so cruel to me just when I most wanted all my powers and energy.

In the morning I tried to get up and walk ; my leg was as if paralysed ; I suffered horribly at every step, and what alarmed me most of all was a black circle round the wound. Even when I found that I could scarcely stand I hardly believed it, and thought it was a nightmare. 'Pack up, Ali,' I exclaimed.

I had a sort of vertigo, but severe as my sufferings were, I set out to walk. Seeing me lame, and guessing what I must be enduring, Ali was sadly downcast. But even if I had felt ready to die, nothing would have induced me to stop. The very idea put me in a fever. I went on therefore, but very slowly, and once fell and lay for a little while on the ground.

We followed the creek on the bank of which we had encamped the evening before, when my attention was attracted by a great noise. On cautiously looking about me, I perceived quite a little fleet of canoes.

‘Another tribe emigrating,’ said Ali. ‘This bodes no good for us ; we had better hide ourselves in the long grass.’

But one of the canoes just then drew to shore, and the crew with loud shouts made signs to us to halt.

‘Let us wait for them,’ I said to Ali. ‘There are full five-and-twenty of them in the canoe, and if they have evil designs upon us, they can easily knock us down. We will lean against this tree and put a good face on it.’

The savages by this time had landed. A bit of rising ground concealed them for a moment from view ; when they came in sight again I directed my field-glass to them in order to count them—was it fever or hallucination ?—when I saw

the chief advancing I thought I recognised Oputa, and as fast as my wound would permit I went to meet him, leaving Ali stupefied.

I was not mistaken. It was indeed Oputa, and I will not attempt to describe the joy with which I grasped his hand. For the second time, when I had almost given myself up for lost, I was rescued.

Oputa told me that he was on his way to Zumbade, king of Ogberi, to conclude a treaty of alliance with him. In the morning, just as he was about to take the northern branch of the creek, he had caught sight of my hat and red jacket and recognised me, and had ordered his rowers to utter shrill cries, which I had taken for the signal for an attack.

‘Come with me,’ he said, when he learnt that I was ill; ‘you can rest at Ogberi; we shall get there this evening.’

I accepted the invitation. It was out of my way, but at all events I should be sure of regaining the Niger, unless Oputa were himself attacked and vanquished, which, with the forces at his disposal, did not appear probable.

As he had said, at nightfall we arrived at Ogberi. The rest during the day had been salutary, and by the king’s orders one of his men had applied poultices of herbs, which I found remarkably soothing. I was able to land without very



acute pain, after which Oputa took me to Zumbade, who, having been apprised of our arrival, received us in his hut of state.

Zumbade was an old man, one of the few negroes I have seen with white hair; there is something cruel in his countenance, which did not prepossess me in his favour. But he received me graciously, and in token of friendship took kolas and palm wine with me.

After the ceremony, I retired. The king placed at my disposal a little suite of rooms formed of one floor only, with a gallery running round. Under this I hung my hammock, in which I slept, while Ali, wrapped in a rug, squatted down at the entrance of my rustic abode.

The next day I felt better; and although the wound was still very painful, I considered that, once the effect of the poison neutralised—and it evidently was so—it would soon heal. But I could not make up my mind to lie still, and set out to explore the town of Ogberi, which I had only just seen the evening before.

The huts of which it is composed are some of them built of thatch and others of hardened sand, very similar to those of Asaba, which are distinguished by their solidity.

The inhabitants are Akpoto negroes, but their king has embraced Islamism, in order to gain favour with the Mussulmans, and to avert their

depredations. He pays tribute to the chief of Yola in Adamawa.

The priests of Ogberi were formerly idolaters, but have now adopted the ample robes of the priests of Islam, and with them have borrowed their ferocious character. There are some real scoundrels among them from the country of the Filanis.

Their religion is a mixture of idolatry and Islamism. Every morning at daybreak, and in the evening at sunset, the priests call the people to prayer, crying all through the town: '*Alla-hakubaru!*' These priests call themselves the interpreters of Yebirila, the messenger of the Prophet, and foster superstition among the people, who seem both to fear and venerate them. When any ceremony is to take place they exhibit to the crowd bits of stuff on which are inscribed in Hausa the names of the angels who inhabit the abodes of the blessed, as well as some articles of their singular creed. I collected some of them, which bore evidence of having been borrowed from the Koran, but from the Koran travestied and corrupted.

On the subject of the last judgment the Akpotos whom I met with profess a very curious creed. According to them, between the earth and the entrance to Paradise there is an immensely long bridge (*dogokadaruka*), so long that it would

take a thousand years to walk across it (*dubusekaru*). It is thrown over a bottomless abyss, and is no wider than the edge of a sword. Those only who profess the true faith are called upon to cross it. They are sure to reach the end of it, but the time it will take them depends upon how they have lived on earth. Some have to cross it on foot, whom, as may be imagined, it will take a very long time ; others, more fortunate, will go on horseback, without any danger, but at a walking pace ; others, more holy, will gallop over, while the saints *par excellence*, will fly over to Paradise in no time.

As for this famous paradise, it is altogether in conformity with the ideas of happiness of most of the negroes. I understand that it is the paradise of Mohammed revised, corrected, and considerably exaggerated ; that it is peopled by innumerable *houris*, and that eternal felicity is promised to those who have the good fortune to enter there. One really would not have expected to find so much debauched imagination among the negroes. Take what follows for instance : there is in some part of it a palace so vast, that to make the tour of it on horseback would take five hundred years, and it is full of beauties, every one you see more charming than the rest, and their eyes are so bright that they can be seen seven miles off.

If I am not mistaken, I found amongst them

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the story of Jonah, travestied after their fashion : Unusa-Ben-Mata (Jonah, son of Amittai) was a prophet of the true God. But he was proud of his mission, and one day threw himself into the water expecting to float by a miracle. In order to punish him for his vainglory, the Lord permitted him to be swallowed by a great fish (*keefi kuka*), which in his turn became the prey of an alligator (*kada*) which was swallowed by a hippopotamus (*dorena*), and they lived thus one inside the other for a thousand years. At the end of this time God commanded the hippopotamus to vomit the alligator, and the alligator to vomit the fish, and the fish to vomit Unusa on the bank. Unusa then acknowledged his own littleness and the greatness of God. He confessed his fault and embraced the true faith.

If the negroes are not wanting in imagination neither do they seem to be in observation. According to the natives of Ogberi, the small black venomous flies (*rairai-kuda*) which swarm in the creeks, live three days ; mosquitoes, ten ; locusts (*fara*), six months ; oxen (*ta-kari-karai*), thirty years ; asses (*zakai*), fifty ; hyænas (*kuraye*) and serpents (*mat-si-sai*), one hundred ; elephants (*giwaye*), the same as monkeys (*birare*), seven years ; the hippopotamus and scorpions (*kinama*) a thousand.

They divide the day into five parts, namely :

daybreak, or, as they call it, *asuba* ; morning, or *dasafe* ; noon, or *rana saka* ; sunset, or *almuru*, and night, or *leesha*.

For the rest, although subject to the laws of the Koran, they are polytheists at heart. Among other divinities they worship Agun, god of the chase, and Sokogba, god of thunder. Frogs are in their eyes sacred creatures, also the large brown eagles (*halietus vocifer*) which abound in their country, perch upon the tops of the huts, and feed upon insects, of which they make great slaughter.

By way of salutation the Mussulman negroes embrace, each placing the right hand on the left shoulder of the other ; but in saluting the king they kneel.

They cultivate the ground tolerably well ; their plantations of yams (*dioscorea alata*) and bulbiferous *helmia* are very fine, and like their bananas and plantains produce splendid fruits. They also cultivate maize, the cassava, the sweet potato, the colocassia, and the manioc ; they are acquainted with the pepper tree, the *koumbo* as it is called (or *xylope* of Ethiopia) ; and, finally, they plant large quantities of *grewia mollis*, of which they make cord and many other things of remarkable fineness and strength.

Besides palm and bamboo wine, a beverage is to be found on the Benueh similar to beer, made of a cereal plant, *eleusinia coracana* ; although it is

not very palatable at first, one gets accustomed to it, and it is refreshing from its acidity.

Tobacco is grown everywhere among the tribes on the shores of the Benueh. It is said to be indigenous in Logami in the Central Soudan ; it is very much like the tobacco of Virginia. The sugar-cane, on the contrary, which is met with everywhere on the Niger, particularly at Oko, and is very fine, is not seen along the course of the Benueh.

Slavery unfortunately reigns supreme there, with its long train of misery, cruelty, and horrors. The masters are not even obliged to feed their slaves ; they have to provide for themselves as they best can. They are called *harbes*, and in the great majority of cases are subjected to all kinds of cruel treatment, and become at last degraded to the level of the brutes.

The tribes on the shores of the Benueh are mostly very ugly, but the men are above the middle height. The obesity of the women is quite abnormal, and, as among other Orientals, it is considered a mark of beauty and distinction. I could not have imagined that any people, however barbarous, could find a charm in this monstrous deformity, but such is the case. Some of the women weigh four hundred pounds, and they are the favourites of kings and grandees. One can scarcely believe one's eyes and ears. Added to this,



they adorn themselves with the most grotesque ornaments. Nothing comes amiss to them ; they make their necklaces of beads, bits of wood and bone, and scraps of leather mixed up with teeth of crocodiles and jackals, eagles' claws, vertebræ of serpents, and blue beads, a native product made by smelting old bottles and colouring them during the process with indigo. Nothing can be coarser of its kind, but the natives attach a value to them, while they care very little for our beads. The European products they care for, and with these a traveller should provide himself, are stuffs, metals, fire-arms, gunpowder, and salt, as well as such articles as are brought them by the Moorish caravans.

Next to the neck it is the ears that the women of the Benueh load with ornaments *sui generis*. They literally hang them round with slender rings of copper and iron, and this barbarous adornment is often completed by a clumsy pendant or a bit of blue glass, of which they are very vain.

Upon the whole, the natives of these regions are industrious ; they work skilfully in copper, and sometimes even with a certain elegance ; they make the points of lances with it, knives, palm oil lamps, rings, and bracelets. They also forge iron, but very indifferently. They make pottery, and the decoration of some of their vases recalls the Egyptian style of art. They often use little fur-

naces of clay for smelting copper, gold, and glass, clumsily made but very strong.

The next day but one after my arrival at Ogberi, hoping to get some rest, I was lying in my hammock towards eight o'clock in the evening when Ben-Ali came to tell me that Oputa wanted to speak to me. He followed immediately.

On shaking hands I noticed an air of uneasiness about him, but did not think any more of it. He told me that Zumbade was going to celebrate a great festival that night in honour of the white man, and that I was pressing invited to attend.

'With the greatest pleasure,' I replied, and getting out of my hammock, went with him to the king's dwelling; he was already surrounded by a multitude of natives. We were received by him with marks of great satisfaction, and were offered palm wine and kolas, while his people distributed gin and rum among the crowd. The libations over, we proceeded towards the theatre of the ceremony near the town.

It was a splendid night, the moon was full, and cast fantastic shadows far over the plain.

What was going to happen?

Near the seats reserved for us, I observed with secret terror a scaffold, by the side of which stood a very tall negro with an enormous sabre in his hand in the attitude of an executioner waiting for the victim. A cold shudder came over me—who

was to be the victim? Myself—without a doubt it was myself! Now Oputa's embarrassment and Zumbade's complacency were explained.

Feeling distracted I cast my eyes about me. Not one friendly face, for even Ben-Ali had kept behind with my rifle. I had only my revolvers with me; with them, though I might delay my fate, I could not avert it. This time I was certainly to meet it, I was to perish miserably by the hands of these hideous savages. Gorged with gin and rum, thirsting for blood, they were already dancing the saraband—I was resolving to sell my life dear, when a little way off I saw some fresh arrivals. Just at first I could not distinguish them from the crowd gamboling and yelling around them, but soon perceived some mollahs escorting two unfortunate negroes, bound and quite naked.

I then understood what sort of festival it was to which I had been invited: it was without doubt a human sacrifice, but I was not to be the victim.

I began to breathe freely again, but soon after, forgetting myself, and my whole soul revolting against the horrid spectacle about to be forced upon me, I said to Oputa: 'Do you suppose I am going to stay here? You know that we white men disapprove of these atrocities. Why did you deceive me? I am going away.'

'Take care,' he replied. 'Remember that you came into Zumbade's country without his know-

ledge. Do not exasperate him by running away from a ceremony which, to him, is a sacred thing.'

'Well, then, tell him that the white man implores pardon for the two wretched men.'

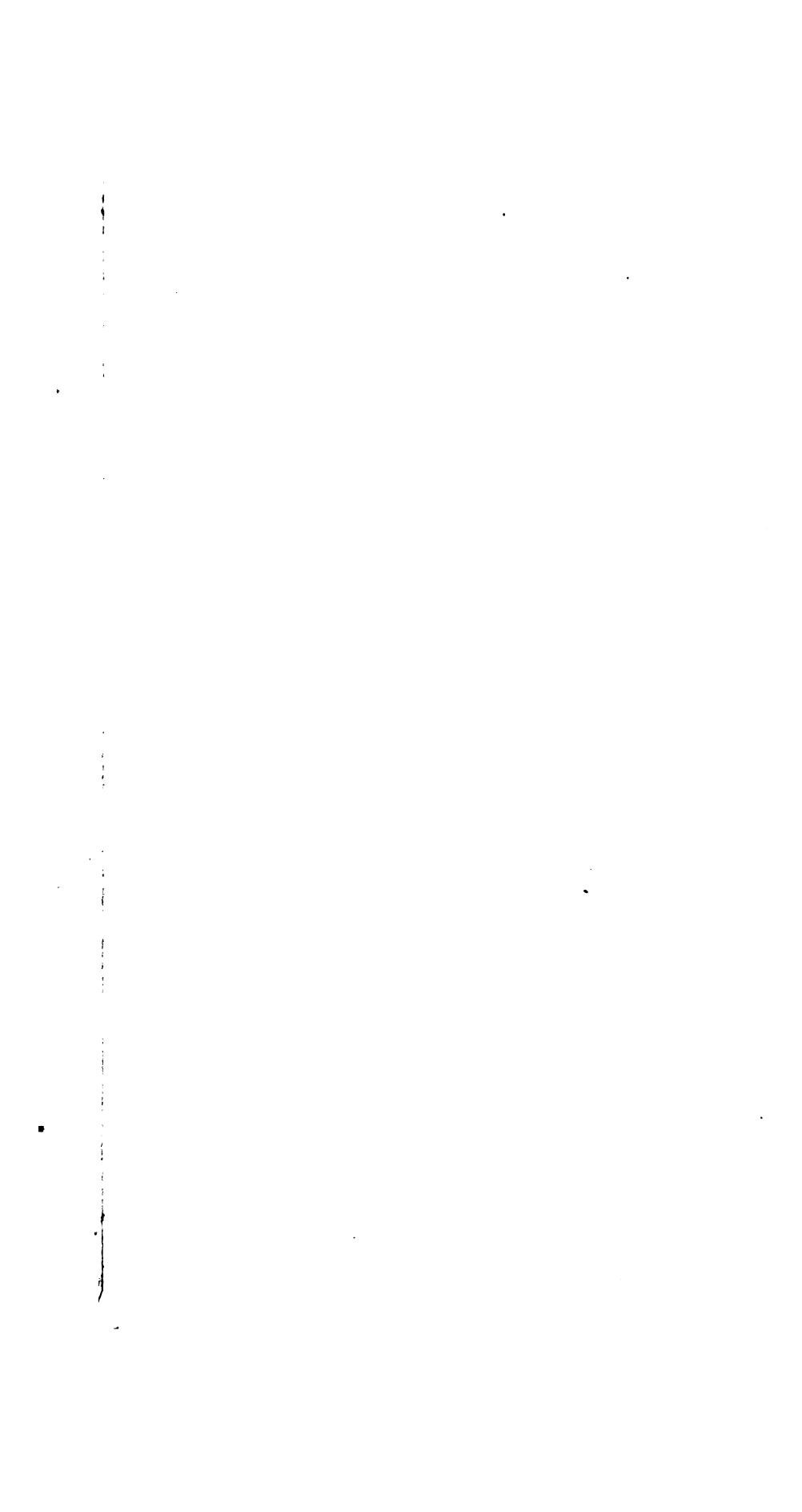
For a moment I flattered myself that they would be spared at my entreaty. But nothing came of it; at a signal from the king their heads rolled at the foot of the scaffold.

Then followed one of those scenes which is never effaced from the memory. As if they were all mad, and drunk they really were, men, women, and children rushed round the two corpses and began to dance a frenzied round accompanied by such music as was never heard. Bamboo flutes, scooped out gourds, the tam-tam, the tambourine and impossible stringed instruments, united their shrill or plaintive chords with the raky voices of the yelling crowd, while Zumbade beat time with his hands. And the moon shed her light on this odious saturnalia, and the red reflections from the fires burning all around made it seem like a scene from the infernal regions.

I went away as soon as possible, distracted and revolted by the monstrous spectacle I had witnessed, and not without having shown my extreme repugnance to it.

On returning to my hut, after the violent emotions I had experienced, sleep fled from my eyelids, and the night was passed as in a hideous dream.







## CHAPTER XV.

RETURN TO THE NIGER—IGBEGBE—SLAVE MARKET—THE ‘EDGAR’—  
 ATTACK BY THE IGBIRAS—THE PENAL CODE OF BIDA—DESCENT  
 OF THE NIGER—THE ENGLISH CONSUL—COUP D’ÉTAT OF DAHOMY  
 —THE FIRM OF RÉGIS, SENR.—ON BOARD THE ‘ROQUELLE’—RE-  
 TURN TO BELGIUM.

THE next day, when I informed Oputa of my intention of leaving, he told me that he had concluded his negotiations with Zumbade, and offered to take me back to the Niger. Of course I accepted his offer with alacrity.

When I took leave of Zumbade I gave him a few little presents, in return for which he gave me specimens of the various manufactures of his subjects, and allowed me to make my own choice in his hut.

On the appearance of Oputa’s flotilla the inhabitants of Ogberi ran in crowds to the shore, saluting us with their hurrahs, songs, and shouts. Poor wretches ! they had little idea of the mortal fright they had given me the evening before.

It took us six days to get to Igbegbe, at the confluence of the Benueh and Niger. I took advantage of them to make notes on all sorts of subjects,

to enrich my herbal, and to collect a few insects. My butterfly hunt was less successful than I could have wished. Being the rainy season, the *genus* papilionaceæ does not abound in the region in which we were.

The hippopotamus, on the contrary, was never wanting. We killed one, and I kept his skull, after having buried it for a night on the shore of the creek where we halted. So great is the number of worms and insects of all sorts which burrow in the soil that by this method it was entirely stripped of the flesh.

At length, on the fifth day, I caught sight of the Niger. Merely to see it made me tremble with joy, for it was to bring me nearer to my country.

My arrival at Igbegbe was marked by an accident which, without being very serious, was a grievous affliction to me. The canoe which contained the head of the hippopotamus, the elephants' tusks, gifts of various chiefs on the Benueh, and native arms was upset. There was no help for it, and, sorry as I was, I had to give up all hope of regaining any of them. Happily, the greater part of my collections was in another canoe, which, thank God, was not overturned, to which I owe my success in bringing them back safe and sound to Europe.

As to my notes, I took care never to be separated from them.

The slave market at Igbegbe is the saddest sight in the world. Just like beasts of burden, men, women, and children are publicly exposed quite naked to the gaze of amateurs, to be sold to the highest bidder. The slave dealer does his best to show off their good qualities, and the buyer, in his turn, subjects them to a minute and critical examination. Among other things, he looks into their mouths, as our horse-dealers do with horses, to see the state of their teeth, which is, it appears, an essential point. It is true that the poor creatures who are subjected to this inspection submit to it without the least recoil, as if it were the most natural and simple thing in the world. From all I could hear, their degradation is so great that they see nothing in it to wound their feelings. Poor human nature, to what depths thou canst descend !

The price of the goods varies, of course, according to age, sex, strength, and beauty ; robust, well-made young men fetch from 700 to 1,000 francs, provided that they do not come from a district where the natives are considered restless, spiteful, or vindictive. In this case they do not easily find purchasers. Young girls with good complexions are sought for at 500, 600, or even as high as 800 francs ; the price, it must be understood, being paid in merchandise. Boys are valued at 200, 100, or even less ; they buy them very

young, in order to make eunuchs of them, and they are reserved for the seraglios of the East. As may be supposed, there is a great mortality among them, which may, without exaggeration, be estimated at eighty per cent. Those who survive, therefore, generally fetch a high price.

At Igbegbe I finally took leave of Oputa. I thanked him most heartily for his services, and to prove to him that I fully estimated their importance, I expressed a hope that some day the Belgian flag would wave at Ogbekin, over a mercantile house managed by my countrymen. He, in his turn, promised hospitality to the whites who should come to trade in his country. I then said good-bye to him after having made him a present of a rifle and a revolver on the Egyptian system, with which he seemed delighted, and in return, besides other things, he gave me a ring of African gold, of native workmanship, and surprisingly fine it is, considering the imperfection of their tools.

There is only the breadth of the Niger between Igbegbe and Lokoya, and as I knew that a little steamer, the 'Edgar,' belonging to the African Company, would put in there the next day, and then go down the river, I crossed over at once. She duly arrived, and I was happy to find on board, as well as Captain Haynes, Mr. Hook, with whom I had made the voyage in the 'Victoria.' Both welcomed me with the greatest cordiality,

and it was decided that I should join company with them.

One incident occurred which might have been fatal to my return. The 'Edgar' discharged for the Lokoya factory some casks of rum, which had to be rolled by hand about 300 yards. Towards evening the natives of Igbira, settled along the shore of the river, stole two of them. When they were called upon to restore them next day, they came in crowds and assailed us with bows and arrows. Happily, the inhabitants of Lokoya interfered, and after long palaver persuaded them to cease hostilities. I am indebted to this incident for having made the acquaintance of Müye, Dr. Baikie's guide and interpreter during the voyage he made in 1854 in the 'Pleiad.' I learnt from him that the reason why the natives refused to give up the culprits was the nature of the punishment to which they would be subjected. The country is under the jurisdiction of the King of Bida, and according to the prevailing laws, if a thief restores what he has stolen or pays an equivalent, he incurs no punishment; he is even looked upon as a clever fellow, and is admired and, on occasion, consulted. If, on the contrary, he does neither the one nor the other, his left hand is cut off; on a repetition of the offence, the right foot, and the right hand if he be guilty of larceny a third time. Being thus incapable of supplying his wants, he becomes the



guest and messmate of the king, who is obliged to board and lodge him at the entrance of his dwelling. A curious penal code, certainly.

The thieves, however, were given up to Bida, and as a reparation for the outrage on the 'Edgar,' the tribe was condemned to pay the company 500 sacks of cowries, valued at about 500*l*. Müye doubted whether they would be able to pay. If not, according to all appearance, the King of Bida would fall upon them and reduce them to slavery.

This incident over, we weighed anchor. On our arrival at Akassa I found the English Consul there, Mr. David Hopkins. He is an accomplished gentleman, received me most kindly, and, thanks to him, I was able to get to Lagos, on the coast of Dahomey.

There has been much talk in Europe of Gelele, the King of Dahomey, and everybody knows that he has an odious reputation. The question is whether he deserves it. God forbid that I should extenuate the horror of the human hecatombs of which his country is too often the scene, but I doubt whether he alone is responsible for them, and whether he could abolish them if he would without hazarding his own life. The real culprits are the stupid and ferocious ministers of the prevailing religion of the country. No one who knows Africa will for a moment doubt that this is the case.

As for the hatred for white men with which he



is credited, I am able to state that it is very much exaggerated. Besides having uniformly shown a desire to enter into commercial relations with them, he has more than once manifested real friendship for them, especially in his relations with the house of Régis, senr., of Marseilles. I may add that he was very polite to me. Hearing of my being in his dominions, he not only invited me to come and see him at Abomey, but offered me an escort. The offer was tempting, and I had no reason for distrusting it; in fact, if any disaster happens to a European *en route* for Abomey, the escort in charge of him is put to death as a penalty for negligence or complicity. But though I had no fears about the results of this novel excursion, the destitution to which I was reduced forbade my undertaking it.

Perhaps the English have been wrong in allowing their designs to be seen through of imposing their protectorate on several points on the coast, Whydah and the Popos, for example, which are dependents of Dahomey. They have thus, to some extent, alienated Gelele's favour, who naturally desires to maintain his power, and he has been more than ever justified in doing so by the French houses of the two Régis and Cyprien Fabre, who have had no reason to complain of him, and have never expressed any desire to see a European administration substituted for his.

Great and sincere admirer as I am of the colonising genius of England, and salutary, in my opinion, as her intervention in the affairs of Africa has been, an intervention of which I have myself experienced the beneficial influence, I must in truth declare that the line of conduct she has pursued towards the King of Dahomey seems to me imprudent, and I fear that it may compromise the relations which have for a long time existed between him and Europeans, particularly the house of Régis.

At the time of my passing through the country there was much talk of an outrage by Gelele's representatives on a British subject, of a fine of 200 tuns of palm oil demanded from him by way of reparation, of his refusal to pay it, and consequently of the possibility of a war, the prospect of which occasioned great alarm, and no wonder; for the king had declared that on the day when an English soldier set foot on his territory he would order the massacre of all the white men to be found there. Now, the mercantile houses in the interior are nearly all in the hands of Frenchmen, agents of Régis, senr., and Cyprien Fabre, of Marseilles.

From the information I could get, and I believe it to be correct, the circumstances were these:—The agents of the European firms at Dahomey had a native commissioner who traded with the

interior. Otherwise quite solvent, his office of middle-man obliged him to make large advances in goods ; he carried on his business honourably, and no one ever had a word to say against him. One day he had some words with the *yavogan*, viceroy of Whydah, who had him arrested and confiscated his property. This occasioned great consternation among the European houses, to whom he owed large sums of money. Their managers begged the *caboceer*<sup>1</sup> to plead their cause with Gelele. The *caboceer* received them with politeness, and, as the result showed, would have done justice to their request. But while the representatives of the houses of Régis, senr., and Cyprien Fabre observed the usual forms, the representative of the English house of S. . . gave way to invectives against the king and his agents, and even said disobliging things to the *caboceer*, who was attending to his request. Irritated by this, the *caboceer* had him seized and beaten, and threatened to have him sent next day to Abomey, which would have been his death warrant. Happily the French agents interceded for him and obtained his release.

But instead of letting the matter rest there, the English agent complained to his Government, who tried in vain to compel Gelele to pay the 200 tuns of oil by way of reparation. Gelele gave a down-

<sup>1</sup> A sort of delegate of the king on several points on the coast.

right refusal, and then arose rumours of war. A war would have ruined all the French establishments in the interior, and occasioned all the white men managing them to be massacred. In order to prevent it the houses of Régis, senr., and Cyprien Fabre agreed to pay half the demand instead of the king, namely, 100 tons. This they did and there the matter ended.

In fact, if it were not for fetishism, which is the real cause of the abominable butchery of human life which takes place there, and if the Europeans would give up the idea of trying to rule, I am persuaded that Dahomey would be one of the points on the coast of Africa where their influence might, in a short time, exert a most beneficial influence.

I found among the Ibadans, the Jabous, and some other tribes of the delta of the Niger and a few other parts of the coast, a very curious tradition. They always see the European on board steamers, in canoes or pontoons ; long experience has taught them that he generally succumbs when he takes up his abode on terra firma ; they have no idea that there is any other country beyond the seas where he can live on shore. They therefore conclude that he is under some curse, and condemned to wander perpetually over the water, and that when he abandons this element he is subject to certain death ; in short, that no continent

exists for him, and that the water is his sole domain.

At Lagos I had the good fortune to obtain most valuable aid from M. Spinosi, agent of the house of Régis, senr., which has splendid offices there. Now that I have made acquaintance with them, I understand the prestige which even the name of Régis has for the natives of Dahomey. In their eyes he is in fact the great king of the white men, and his firm the first of houses of business. It is the good which he has done them which has occasioned his fame, and certainly if any one deserves it it is he.

However, it was time to think of my return. M. Spinosi generously offered his services and overcame all difficulties. I owe him the warmest thanks, and shall long remember his kindness.

I embarked for Liverpool on board the steamer 'Roquette.' After again touching at the chief trading points on the coast, and having put into the Canary Islands and Madeira, and passed through England, I reached Belgium on December 17, 1878.

Need I say that my first care on landing on Belgian soil was to transmit the letter with which the Bishop of the Niger had entrusted me for H.M. King Leopold II.?

Having performed this duty I now fulfil the second, in tendering my thanks to Admiral Baron



de la Ronciere-le-Noury for his kind support and encouragement. It is partly to him, to his advice and intelligence, that I owe the success of my enterprise, and I am too sensible of it ever to forget it.

At the same time I sent to the African International Association of Brussels my notes, maps, observations, and a succinct report of my travels, and they met with a favourable reception. I added to these a work on the Loualaba, intended to draw the attention of future explorers of the region of the great lakes to the presumable existence of an important branch of this river between Lake Kamolondo and the point of junction of the Loukouga with Lououa. May the name of my country be connected with the solution of this grand problem.

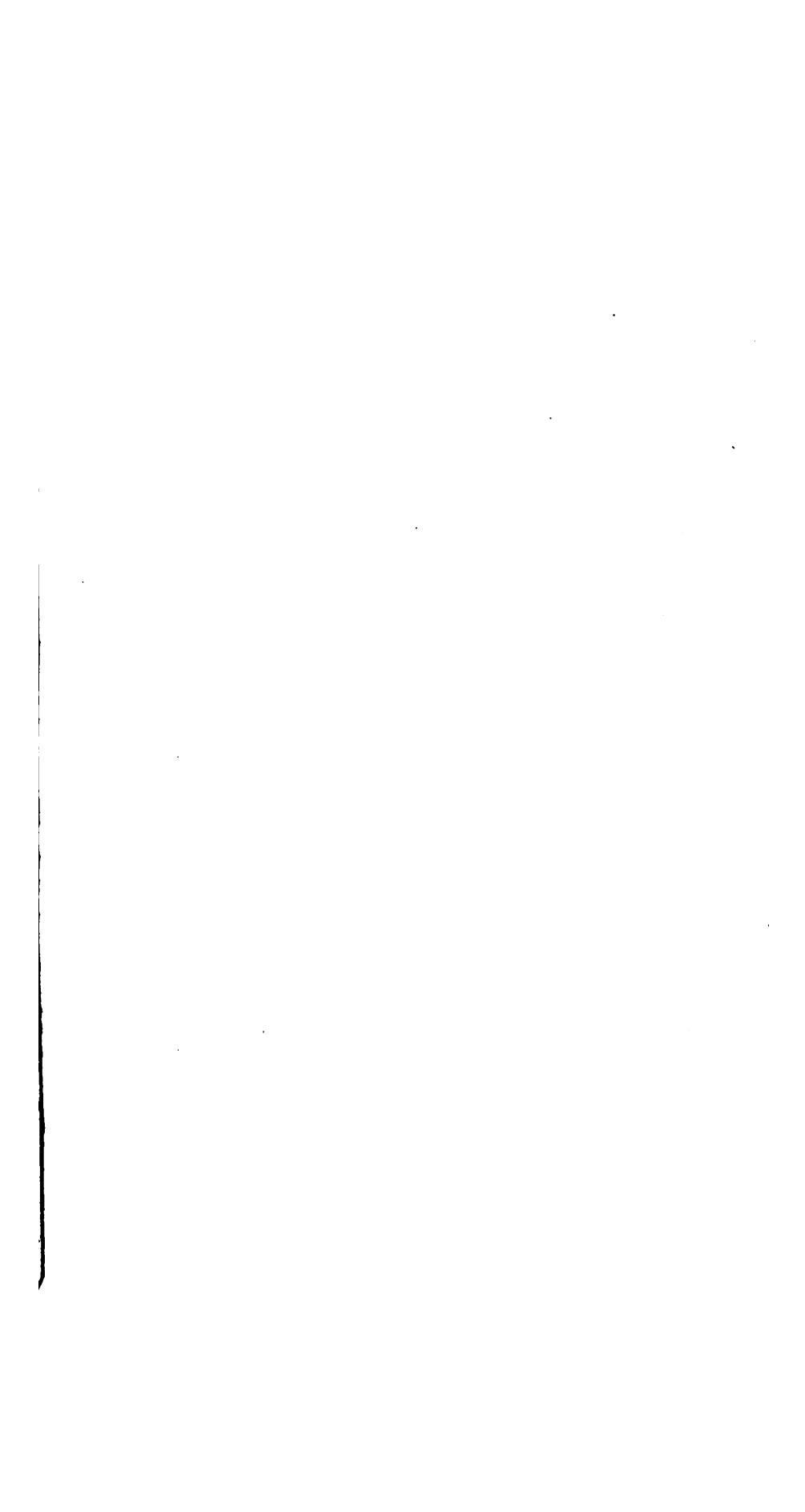
My collections have enriched the ethnographic and natural history museums of my country.

I left Bordeaux on April 5, so that my travels had lasted eight months, and during the whole time I had not suffered from fever nor any of the other affections which have been so fatal to travellers. Contrary to all expectation, the climate of Africa had been very indulgent to me. In spite of a thousand privations, a thousand dangers, in spite of burning skies, pestilential miasmas, mosquitoes, want of sleep, and the worry occasioned by the inadequacy of my resources—in spite of ennui, delays, and mishaps which were the inevitable



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accompaniments of such an expedition—in a word, in spite of miseries of all sorts, my health had never suffered. Deeply moved by this unhopèd for good fortune, I returned full of gratitude to heaven for having restored me safe and sound to my friends.



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